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A Challenge to Darkness

A CHALLENGE TO DARKNESS

The Life Story of

J. GEORGES SCAPINI

TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY HELEN KELLER
AND A FOREWORD BY
GENERAL HENRI
GOURAUD

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FIRST EDITION

A Foreword by

General Henri Gouraud

Member of the "Conseil Supérieur de la Guerre"
Military Governor of Paris, Late Guest of the Rainbow Division in America

L'année dernière l'American Legion appelait à sa Convention annuelle le député Français aveugle Georges Scapini.

Tous ceux qui le connaissent sont émus par le sacrifice qu'il a fait sur le champ de bataille en combattant pour sauver son pays odieusement envahi, et admirent l'énergie et l'intelligence qui lui ont permis de surmonter la plus cruelle des infirmités et de pouvoir continuer à servir la France.

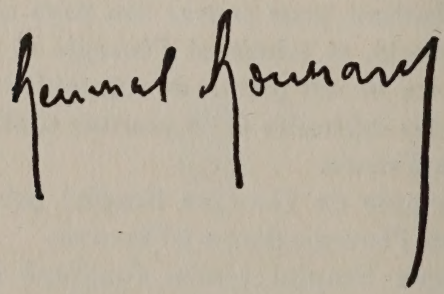
L'exemple de Georges Scapini prouve la force que l'énergie donne à l'homme.

Lorsque Scapini tomba foudroyé à bout portant, en pleine bataille et qu'il se réveilla les yeux brûlés et perdus à jamais, il aurait pu,

semble-t-il, se laisser aller au découragement. Il n'en connut pas une heure. Dès que l'état de sa santé le lui permit, il se remit au travail, apprit rapidement cet admirable alphabet Braille qui rend la joie de la lecture aux aveugles.

Il voulut que sa force d'action retrouvée ne fut pas consacrée à ses intérêts personnels, mais bien à ceux du pays. Le peuple de Paris aux dernières élections a compris tout cela et l'a élu.

Nul doute que de son côté l'American Legion en l'appelant à assister à sa Convention annuelle à San Antonio ait voulu honorer en lui une admirable image du courage et de l'énergie.



INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK, *written by a man suddenly and tragically blinded in the World War, is another torch like those with which invincible blind men have from age to age flashed courage to their fellows. Georges Scapini's autobiography cannot fail to rekindle the hope of men and women who lose their way in the dark amid difficulties that never end. The account he gives of his ambitions and failures and his determination to conquer is a gallant challenge even to those with all their faculties.*

The frank, humorous, friendly way in which M. Scapini presents himself to his readers is most engaging. He carries the burden of blindness and the dependence and restraints it entails as a soldier carries his knapsack—jauntily, with music and colors flying. Like Milton

he seems to say, "Why should we not endure a misfortune which it behooves everyone to be prepared to endure if it should happen?"

M. Scapini is not the only man without sight who has fought on the battle fields. The Middle Ages give us two picturesque blind warriors. One was known as John the blind King of Bohemia, who fell fighting valiantly at Crécy. The other is John de Trocznow, or Ziska, who, though sightless (having lost one eye and then the other in battle), led the army of the Hussites successfully to victory.

Then in England about the middle of the Eighteenth Century there was John Metcalf, a blind man who won fame as the first native road maker in England. We hear of him first as playing his violin at Harrogate. The gay throng, listening to the music, does not suspect that the tall, good-looking young man is blind. His next public appearance is at the head of a company marching to join Wade's army, which was to crush the rebellion of 1745. Now he is re-

splendent in buff and blue, and is known as "Blind Jack." His unique personality penetrates the dullness of those somber Georgian days. He was a sportsman, a fearless rider, a raconteur—the sort of person we describe as "the best of good fellows."

Complacent persons whose "perfect sight has not added to their treasures of knowledge or understanding" often assert that loss of sight is compensated for by greater powers of mental concentration. According to them the blind are saved the distracting annoyances of things seen. They say, "Democritus put out his eyes to enable him to think more intensely." One wonders a little maliciously why they do not follow the example of the great Epicurean philosopher. It is nonsense to think that anything can compensate an individual for the loss of his sight.

It was not his blindness that made Nicholas Saunderson a great mathematician, it was his natural genius; undoubtedly he was aided in

the pursuit of his studies by being relieved of the distractions of the wandering eye. While he was still a young man, students from several colleges at Cambridge University flocked in crowds to hear him expound the Newtonian philosophy, which was understood only by the most learned of the time. His clearness and lucidity of thought rendered it intelligible to the average student. As they listened, they marveled how a blind man could lecture on optics, the nature of light and color, and the phenomena of vision. His lucidity of mind combined with a profound knowledge of mathematics explains the miracle. He made the acquaintance of Halley and Sir Isaac Newton and other distinguished scientists of his day. When Saunderson was thirty years of age he was chosen Fourth Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge. A mandate had been secured from Queen Anne conferring on him the degree of M.A., thus removing the technical disability of his not being admitted to

the University on account of his blindness. Among his influential supporters was Newton himself. Lord Chesterfield, who attended Saunderson's lectures, described him as "a man who had lost the use of his own sight, but taught others to use theirs."

It is not surprising that the blind should excel in the art of music, since music takes the place of light and color in their dark lives. John Stanley, a composer and organist of great distinction, lived in the Eighteenth Century, at the same time that Handel did. The Society of the Inner Temple chose him as organist of the Temple Church in 1734, and he held this position until the end of his life. A contemporary, Dr. Alcock, tells us that when the service of St. Andrews or the Temple was ended it was common to see forty or fifty organists waiting to hear Stanley's "Voluntary"; and Handel himself was frequently seen at both places. It is said that at a performance of Handel's "Te Deum in D" Stanley discovered that the organ

was a semi-tone above concert pitch, and without the least preparation he transposed the whole composition. The key into which he changed it, C sharp major, was then considered so difficult that it was seldom used, and on that account the blind organist's feat was thought all the more remarkable. His mastery and technique were as wonderful as the poignantly moving effect of his playing.

It is generally supposed that sight is indispensable to the scientist. Yet a man without sight penetrated many secrets of nature which for ages had baffled the keenest eyes. François Huber was a Swiss savant, born at Geneva. He devoted his life to the observation and study of the bee, its habits and instincts; he laid the foundations of modern apiarian science. For a century, indeed, he was the leading authority on bees. Living in darkness himself, he threw light in dark places for the enlightenment of many, and the advancement of learning. "I am much more certain," he said one day to a friend

laughingly, "of what I relate than you are yourself; for you publish only what you see with your own eyes, whereas I take a medium among the testimony of many." He conducted his researches with the assistance of his faithful servant Burens. There is nothing more touching in the history of the blind and their triumphs than this story of patient collaboration in which a sightless man guided with his spirit the eyes and hands of his helper.

Two other blind men who bravely kept their place in the forefront of life's battle were Alexander Rodenbach, one of Valentin Hauy's pupils—a distinguished Belgian statesman and writer, and Jacques Augustin Thierry, who lost his sight at the age of thirty, writing his Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands, *but who with the aid of others' eyes wrote his great work on the Merovingians.*

Louis Braille, a student at the National Institute for the Blind, Paris, was a wonderful leader in the kingdom of the sightless. It was

his genius that brought to perfection the embossed system of reading and writing which has ever since borne his name—a proud monument in Darkland.

In the Nineteenth Century appeared two noble examples of heroism in the dark. One of them was Henry Fawcett, who, while he could see, had a great desire to enter Parliament. He was accidentally blinded by two shots from his father's gun while they were bird hunting. But in ten minutes after the accident he had resolved to face the future unflinchingly. He submitted to the inevitable, but would not admit even to himself that blindness meant the ruin of all his hopes, and it did not; for he realized the high ambitions of his youth. He held the position of Professor of Political Economy at Cambridge University. For nineteen years he was a member of Parliament. Gladstone appointed him Postmaster-General of Great Britain. Fawcett introduced many practical improvements in the postal service, among them

the Parcels Post. When he spoke for the blind, he begged his hearers to help them rise from the misery of dependence to the self-reliance and cheerfulness that come with the power to earn one's living. He was also a champion of popular education, and he labored unceasingly to remove the mental degradation of millions of his fellow countrymen.

The life of Sir Francis Campbell cannot fail to hearten those who strive to restore the blind to usefulness. He was an American, a native of Tennessee. His blindness and poverty were borne with a proud spirit and valiantly overcome. He was an inspiring example of self-reliance and industry. Just to show the blind what they could do, he climbed Mont Blanc. The crowning work of his life was founding and building up the Royal Normal College and Academy for the Blind near London.

Is it not, then, true that, as Milton said, "It is not as wretched to be blind as it is to be incapable of enduring blindness"? As a matter

of fact, when most human beings are overtaken by disaster, they adjust themselves more or less successfully to the conditions it imposes. No one who has innate capacities and force of character is overwhelmed by a physical handicap. The loss of sight did not halt Huber in the pursuit of his studies, nor Leonhard Euler, the Swiss astronomer, who carried vast calculations in his head. Nor did it halt Sir Arthur Pearson, one of England's pioneer newspaper men, who, after becoming blind, organized St. Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors, and whose tireless enthusiasm was as a banner leading thousands of handicapped human beings to victory. To this galaxy of blind heroes we add the name of Georges Scapini. In his book he writes with proud reserve of the calamity which befell him; but his few words are eloquent to the imagination. One lives with him through the days of suspense when the bitterest knowledge of the truth would have been easier to bear than the torture of uncertainty.

The black thoughts that besiege his brain bite into one's heart. As he lies on his cot one feels the weight of sadness that has no measure of comparison, the helplessness that has no word whatever.

"DEATH IS JUST DEATH, AND DOES
NOT INCREASE,
SUSPENSE DOES NOT CONCLUDE,
BUT PERISHES TO LIVE ANEW."

Each day that his physician keeps from him the truth increases the horror of blindness. One stands beside him, tense and fearful, at the hospital window when he tries to pierce the thick veil that shuts out the beauty of sky and cloud and light! There is another life to live, they say. "How," the quivering lips question, "can life be endured when every day is dark and full of troubling memories? O God, I am homesick for the light! They bring me food and drink and flowers to smell, and I add salt tears and moans to the balm. My soul tastes only the bitter

waters of Marah. I am still young—must I grope through all the years to come, desolate and lonely?"

But, fortunately, the healthiness of M. Scapini's mind prevented him from dwelling for long on the gloomy aspects of his situation. His buoyant temperament rebelled against sitting in an armchair, brooding on his tragedy.

The hardest battle M. Scapini had to fight was with himself. Like many of those who first encounter the ambushed foes and strange alarms of the dark, he shrank from being different from seeing people. The idea of being in a class apart was repugnant to him. He was sensitive and self-conscious, and for a long time he would not learn to read with his fingers. This illustrates the truth of the Stoic proverb that "men are tormented by the opinions they have of things rather than by the things themselves."

It is still difficult to convince the seeing public that blind people have the same ambitions and want the same things that everyone else does—

work, and some of the other sweet satisfactions of life. When the seeing learn not to say, "Pity the blind," but rather, "This way, comrade," and hold out a friendly hand to them, the difficulties of the sightless will no longer be insurmountable. This was the kind of friend M. Scapini had in a lawyer who stood behind him until he had established himself in his profession. It is hard enough for one in the full possession of his faculties to succeed in a competitive world. It is impossible for a blind man to make headway without a great deal of practical assistance in a world where the majority see and only a few cannot see.

But one has not learned the lesson of life who does not each day surmount a prejudice. M. Scapini has resolutely flung aside morbid obsessions and faced life, determined to get out of it accomplishment and happiness. He now holds a position of high trust in the political life of France. The account of his election to the Chamber of Deputies is very instructive and

interesting. It reveals qualities of coolness and resourcefulness amid turmoil and intrigue. It is to be hoped that M. Scapini will bring an open mind to the problems of his nation. If he displays the same fearlessness and force in politics as he has displayed in his fight against limitation and darkness, his usefulness will not be confined to his own country.

HELEN KELLER.

PART I

Chapter I

I HAVE undertaken to write this book because I have noticed that too many people become easily discouraged for various reasons, sometimes for none at all, and according to an old French saying, "Throw the handle after the ax."

Life is in a constant process of evolution. The difficulties which man encounters on his way are normally bound to be there. The road is a rough one, and if the individual is justified in being surprised at the obstacles which confront him, he is not given a chance to dwell on them any length of time.

There is a natural force which pushes the human being forward; it ought to prevent every healthy mind from brooding on the past or indulging in self-pity because of a hard fate. Was

not Lot's wife changed into a pillar of salt because she turned back and contemplated burning Sodom, beneath whose ruins was buried a whole past?

We ought to bend all our energies to the task of moral and physical improvement. Those who exhaust their vitality in vain, useless regrets become unproductive. If a wall rises on my path I try to get to the other side by scaling it or circumventing it; I do not lose time finding fault with the unjust fate which has placed it there. We do not stand debating the thunderstorm or the rain, we invent lightning conductors and umbrellas.

Human nature is admirably constituted. A supreme Wisdom presided over its origin. A man of genius, Einstein, has established the principle of relativity in mathematics. This principle exists in every department of life.

Happiness, more than anything else in the world, is relative. Each human being has at his disposal an almost equal amount of happiness, and from the top to the bottom of the social

scale the intensity of joy or sorrow experienced by individuals is probably nearly identical. If it were possible, with the aid of a galvanometer, to measure the degree of solid happiness felt by a millionaire in acquiring a splendid yacht, it would likely be found that he has a less degree than that of a workingman who becomes the owner of a coveted small tract of land.

It is undoubtedly true that if we are discouraged and often undone by the disasters that overtake us this is in a large measure due to a defective early education.

There are two kinds of justice. One is human justice, which takes cognizance of our morals and the physical conditions inherent in man's life. We may call it relative justice. The other kind is Divine Justice—perfect and absolute. If we lived in heaven, or the earth were inhabited by angels, we could claim absolute justice. But since we live out our days upon earth, and are compelled to submit to worldly necessities, we must content ourselves with relative justice.

Now, educators are too apt to fill the minds of children with conceptions of absolute justice, the laws of which run counter to the laws of nature. That is why it happens that when natural laws assert themselves the children, as they grow up, encounter increasingly numerous obstacles which they are inclined to regard as unfair. They kick about them, waste their time in vain dispute, and become easily embittered.

This popular tendency, which appears to be disturbing the world more and more, culminates in the folly of Communism. But, as Kipling would say, that's another story.

When a man finds himself in a situation which he considers desperate, three forces contribute to help him find a way out: the instinct of self-preservation, the life-habit, and the will, which, when it is positive and precise, becomes energy. The instinct of self-preservation and the life-habit exist unnoticed and potent in each individual. The impulses which they excite are

more or less effective. They are abstract forces which manifest themselves according to law—quite as naturally as the hand pushes aside a bough which obstructs the path. But they are of little avail unless our will power and energy sustain them.

In other words, the will acts upon the instinct of self-preservation and the life-habit as the developer works on a photographic plate that has been exposed. Without the developer the plate represents nothing; without the will the instinct of self-preservation and the life-habit are a dead letter. The reciprocal action of these forces upon each other makes possible our activity; there is no obstacle which can be judged insurmountable, no situation where there is not a way out.

The only force which can put an end to all action is death; we must bow to its inevitable decree. There is nothing terrible about it. It is curious to note that, although death is the only earthly thing of which we are certain after being

born, yet modern educators exert their ingenuity to find means of making us forget that we are mortal, and consequently leave us unprepared and frightened when our time to die comes.

I hope I can show in this book by a concrete example that no human being has a right to despair. In whatever situation a man may find himself, he has his chance, he ought not to misconceive or undervalue it.

I shall give a very brief sketch of my life. It is not extraordinary, but it does teach a lesson that may bring back courage to those who are in danger of losing it.

Chapter II

MY ARRIVAL on earth was awaited by all my family as a favor from heaven. They wanted a boy, and their wish was fulfilled, to their great joy. Amid such happy circumstances I entered the world October 4, 1893.

I hardly remember my father. I was six years old when he died. The only memento I have of him is a mediocre painting, in which he appears blond, with an energetic face and clear eyes.

According to those who knew me as a child, I was rather difficult, very independent. My ears still buzz with the sinister predictions I heard concerning myself. Thus it was the unanimous opinion of my family that I was destined to die in the gutter or on the scaffold. Fortunately, pessimistic predictions make but little

impression on a child's mind. I listened to them smilingly, with sweet incredulity.

My mother entertained a great deal of company. Her receptions afforded me splendid opportunities of coming into contact with prominent people. I had a very punctilious sense of hospitality, and followed its dictates with conviction; on every occasion I invited to dinner all those who crossed the threshold of my mother's house. I insisted until they accepted. This exasperated my mother, who as a result of my embarrassing conduct found herself at times in a difficult situation.

When my guests were gone I was told positively that I was an unendurable child, that life was intolerable, and that a son like me was a calamity sent by heaven. To tell the truth, I must say this judgment was not entirely unjust.

In my childhood I showed myself pugnacious and fond of adventure. One summer, when we were at Salies-de-Béarn, where my mother and grandmother were taking a cure, I made

the acquaintance of a number of children whose parents lived at the same hotel as we did. I got up an innocent game, the consequences of which came near being tragic: it was a game of redskins, or savages. Of course that meant war. In those happy days I thought that only savages would make war; not until afterward did I come to realize that there might be exceptions to this rule.

I was the white man and, proud of the prerogative I enjoyed because of my superior civilization, I borrowed as a weapon an air gun. It made a noise! I was delighted.

The others—the redskins—were armed with bows cleverly made out of cord and a piece of wood. To make everything seem as real as possible, I had painted the savages with a sort of mixture concocted with walnut brandy. I obtained good results—the resemblance of my little comrades to the Sioux Indians was almost perfect.

I had laid down the rules of the game: the

redskins were on the warpath; I planned an ambuscade for them, they fell into it, of course. I fired some shots with my airgun, and a certain number of redskins chosen for the purpose in advance dropped dead, the rest surrendered, and I captured my prisoners.

Unfortunately, the redskins conspired against me. I had scarcely pulled the trigger of my airgun when they all leaped upon my back, uttering awful shrieks.

They dragged me to the end of the park and bound me to the trunk of a tree. I fought, I screamed, I was suffocated, half strangled, while my pitiless enemies whirled about me in a wild dance.

They wanted to scalp me, and with a wooden knife they hurt my head terribly. Then came torture. The bloodthirsty bandits placed themselves in front of me and loosed their arrows upon me. One of the arrows hit me in the corner of my eye. There was a jet of blood, my assassins, seized with terror, fled in every direction,

and I was left alone, fastened to the tree, screaming steadily.

In half an hour Madame Henri Rochefort, the wife of a prominent journalist, was attracted by my cries and rescued me. She dressed my wound (fortunately, the arrow had not caused any serious injury) and took me back to the hotel. My mother and grandmother had no more peace of mind; they were in a perpetual state of anxiety whenever I strayed a little out of their sight.

I felt a deep, strong satisfaction when I learned that my comrades, whom I had so plentifully painted with walnut brandy, had to be scrubbed with different liquids, soaped, and given a shower bath before they regained their natural color.

Another time I wanted to ride a bicycle, but had none. I borrowed one from a groom at the hotel, and although it was much too big for me I climbed on, and was off. It was a rather complicated affair, for I could touch the pedal only

when it came up. My short legs could not follow its motion, and lost their hold completely when it went down. While the pedal was within reach of my foot, I gave it a vigorous push, the bicycle moved forward; but I could not do everything at once—watch my feet and the pedals and look ahead. Then a terrible collision! I found myself under a cart, between the back wheels.

People came running from every side. My knee was hurt, but I resolved to say nothing. My mother arrived on the scene.

"My poor child, are you bruised? Where did you hurt yourself? How horrible!"

I replied that I was all right. Probably this was a bad course of action; for I was scolded, deprived of my dessert, and taken to my room, where I must remain shut up the whole day. I had leisure to meditate on the irrationality of mothers who punish their children when there is nothing the matter with them, and embrace them when they are in distress. I formed the following resolution: "In the future, when I

fall, I shall always say that I am badly hurt."

One day my family decided to send me as a boarder to a grammar school. All the friends of my mother who had children were consulted. After many discussions they agreed upon the École des Roches. I received this new stroke of fate with equanimity, feeling that even in a grammar school one ought to find some ways "to enjoy life."

In October, at the beginning of the school term, my mother took me to the St. Lazare station from which the train was to start for Dreux. She intrusted me to a professor who accompanied me until I reached a car where I met my new little comrades.

They were courteous to me, but really very inquisitive.

"Was that lady your mother who accompanied you?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't your father come with her?"

"Because he is dead."

"What was your father's business?"

"He owned a biscuit and cake factory."

"Were the biscuits good?"

"I have never tasted them. I have always been taught that people must not eat what they manufacture."

At Dreux we were taken in a big carriage to the suburbs of the town where the school is located. I expected to find there something disagreeable, but there was nothing of the kind at all. The École des Roches is situated in a large park skirted by a river. On my arrival I noticed a football field and a tennis court.

The school plant comprised several buildings covered with flowering vines. I was taken into one of them and shown into a room where five beds were lined up against the wall. I put away my things and went downstairs to rejoin my comrades.

Life at the school was uneventful—classes, football, and tennis. I should have been per-

fectly happy if, on the whole, I had not found that life somewhat monotonous.

Except for M. Bayle, who taught us English, there was nothing about our teachers that merits particular attention. He never went out in the school park unless he was comfortably installed in a carriage hitched to a delightful pony.

M. Bayle was grave, calm, very "diplomat-like," excessively British. He never smiled. His enunciation was clear and precise, lending his English a fine distinction. When he was through with his class he returned to his carriage and his pony and, full of dignity, explored the byroads.

M. Bayle's pony filled me with admiration and envy. One day I could not resist the temptation to ride him. While M. Bayle was busy with his pupils I stole out softly and, with the precautions of an Apache Indian, unhitched the pony, mounted him, and sped away over secluded roads.

I reached the country, my joy knew no bounds, my imagination ran riot! I had in my pocket a copy of *Buffalo Bill,* and from time to time I dismounted and put my ear to the ground so as to hear the distant gallop of the horses of the Sioux Indians crossing the prairie.

The Indians did not come; on the contrary, the day slipped by. It was already nightfall when I remembered that it was dinner time. Then, between my conscience and my desire, I found myself in a cruel dilemma. Should I go back and face the wrath of M. Bayle, or continue my pursuit of adventure. A feeling of cowardice at which I now blush made me choose the second alternative, since the likelihood of punishment seemed more remote. Without much conviction or enthusiasm I took a path that led to a little wood, and I decided to camp there like Buffalo Bill. But—I hesitated. I was hungry, and had nothing to eat, no lasso to catch wild buffaloes. I was pondering deeply on the seriousness of this problem when in the dis-

tance I heard a confused din of whistles—they were looking for me! The disappearance of M. Bayle's pony, my own disappearance, and the close connection between these two facts had awakened suspicion in the minds of our masters. They had supposed that, since the pony could not unhitch himself, I had unhitched him, and that, being a smart little fellow, I had mounted him and gone off for a ride. All this was strictly true; the whole school was in commotion, scouring the country to find me.

Little by little the noises died away, all was silent again, night had fallen. I confess, at that moment I was not very proud of myself. Toward eleven o'clock, driven by hunger and weariness, I took the pony by the reins and turned toward the school. With slow steps, cautiously, I searched for a hole in the hedge through which I could get in. I had found one at last when suddenly I was frozen with terror. Calm, implacable as destiny, the voice of M. Bayle asked me, and in English, too, "Where

do you come from?" It was a wretched predicament; I had been taught not to lie, and it was difficult for me to give an explanation.

M. Bayle caressed his recovered pony, seized him by the reins, and taking me by the arm without saying a word, accompanied me to the door of the building. There he paused, his fingers loosened their clutch. "Go to bed," he said, with an air of indifference. I crossed the threshold, and he went back with his animal.

I stole up to my bed, but I hardly slept, being disturbed over the consequences of my escapade. The next morning, very early, I was called into the office of the director of the school, who notified me that I had to get ready to leave. It had been decided that I should be sent back to my parents. I thought to myself that the joy of that home-coming would certainly be relative.

It would be hard for me to affirm that my return to my native hearth was a triumph. I was covered with reproaches, my mother looked

at me sadly, and the council of mothers was convened anew. This time they decided that I should attend the Collège de Normandie.

I had often heard people speak of that grammar school; it was the rival of the École des Roches in the athletic field. To me the idea of going there was particularly delightful. I was, then, animated with the best intentions when I alighted at the station in Rouen, where a carriage from the school was waiting for me. I quickly became acquainted with all the pupils, who asked me a multitude of questions about the École des Roches. I supplied them with an abundance of details, and I keenly enjoyed being such a precious source of information.

Life at the Collège de Normandie was very similar to that of the École des Roches—study, sports, and so forth. However, the Collège had a big swimming pool, which in my opinion gave it a decided advantage over the École des Roches.

The first year passed pleasantly. I was a good

swimmer, I played tennis well, and I belonged to the first football team; my studies were as they should be—not too hard. That year was marked only by a slight incident:

M. Leroux, director of the building where I lived, was the happy possessor of a magnificent poultry yard. He petted and took care of all kinds of chickens.

M. l'Abbé Rasson had charge of the catechism class, and initiated us into the holy mysteries. I do not know why several of my comrades and I conceived the idea of introducing the most handsome of M. Leroux's roosters to M. l'Abbé Rasson's catechism class. However it may be, we executed this abominable project so successfully that right in the middle of the lecture the rooster, becoming rather nervous, uttered a piercing "cock-a-doodle-doo," which produced such a painful impression upon the Abbé Rasson that the worthy man all but succumbed to the shock. The rooster, probably pleased with the effect he had produced upon

the Abbé Rasson, began again, shook his wings, tried to flutter. There was a scene! The Abbé treated us like infidels. The rooster was restored to his master, and we were condemned to stay in our respective rooms the whole day.

In the course of the second year I was the victim of a curious instance of human injustice. One of our professors, a very distinguished man of great ability, had a bald head—as bald as that of Socrates. A severe but just man, we liked him very much. One day, inspired by I know not what evil instinct, two of my comrades, one of whom was the son of a Hindu maharajah, and I in an idle moment during recess bet that, leaning out of our windows, we would succeed in spitting upon the bald head of Monsieur Morin. Anxiously we three waited at our windows until the good man passed by. He arrived, absent-minded, as usual, keeping close to the wall just as our plan required he should, his face buried in a bulky volume. He came within firing range of the son of the Hindu

maharajah; the latter spat too late, and my other comrade a little too soon. I had, for my part, observed how they both missed the mark; I took my time, the result was capital. M. Morin indignantly raised his head; but the sky was as blue as ever. M. Morin lifted his hand to his head and uttered a roar of anger. Very soon the bells rang out, and the whole school assembled in the courtyard.

The director spoke gravely, as was fitting on such an occasion, and expressed himself in these words: "Gentlemen, one of you has deported himself in a manner which I shall avoid describing. I shall not pass a general sentence—I do not like that. The rule of the Collège is frankness, and you know it. Let the one who spat upon M. Morin's head come forward and explain his conduct." He waited. I came forward and said, "I did it." He took me by the arm, dismissed the other pupils, and dragged me to his office. M. Morin followed.

"Sir," he said severely, "you have committed a misdemeanor which is worthy of censure as well as disgusting."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Nevertheless, you have had the honesty to acknowledge it at once. Therefore, the penalty that is to be impossed upon you will be mitigated. I shall send you to Germany, where you will go through a period of study lasting a year and a half."

I bowed, and went out without a word of recrimination.

Germany—that was something new to me, and the idea of going there did not alarm me at all. I communicated to my two accomplices the decision of the director and pointed out to them that there is certainly no justice here on earth. We all three had sinned deliberately; I alone had been clever enough to succeed, and I alone was punished. This was a case of flagrant injustice. They readily agreed with me. The son

of the Hindu maharajah ended the discussion, saying sententiously, "The road is long, and the wheel turns."

After the wheel had turned and my family had expatiated at great length upon all the moral consequences of my wrongdoing at school, I took the train for Godesberg-on-the-Rhine. The director of the Collège de Normandie had made up his mind to intrust me to the good offices of Herr Wolf, professor of philosophy at the Evangelical Academy.

After an uneventful journey I arrived at Godesberg. It is an enchanting little city on the Rhine, opposite which rise seven mountains. I enjoyed the classic landscape on the banks of the river; it looked as if it had come out of a Nurenberg toy box. On the railroad platform stood Herr Wolf—a sort of assemblage of curved lines: a round head, round shoulders, a round belly, amusingly bowed legs, spectacles perched on a delightful round nose.

On the other hand there was a disturbing con-

trast—Herr Wolf had an extremely sharp voice. He spoke in the head register, and, although his voice was thin, his accent was guttural.

Apart from some slight misunderstandings, my life at the Evangelical Academy drifted along agreeably. The only way in which they punished me was not allowing me to have any sheets. Thus it happened that several times I had to sleep on a horsehair mattress because I had refused to take a walk in the mountains in Herr Wolf's company.

From Godesberg I was directed to go to Hamburg, where I lived enjoyably in the society of other students of every nationality. They played billiards a great deal, and all my money was swallowed up in that noble game. Believe me, I had some bad times before the first of the month came around.

When my finances were in a particularly bad way I had recourse to an ingenious method. I took my clothes to the pawnshop, where money

was lent to me at a reasonable interest to tide me over while I waited for more funds. I kept only a dinner jacket.

I was obliged to go to Paris for my baccalaureate examinations. The money necessary for my journey was sent to me. But a blighting fate would have it that just as I had received the money I met one of my comrades, an American from Philadelphia, with whom I undertook a great match in billiards. In a very short time the money for my trip melted away; I was a little worried about the consequences of my bad luck. It was then that I decided to telegraph simultaneously to six members of my family at a reasonable distance from each other. In my "S O S" I represented to them tragically the state of destitution into which I was plunged, and concluded with a pathetic appeal to their family spirit.

Four out of the six responded, and sent me the sum required for my return trip. This result was unexpected. It was a good average.

Alas! a large part of the money furnished by those generous givers was spent in the second half of my great Franco-American billiard match, and I had to go to Paris third class. I changed cars at the station which comes before Paris, so that I might get off from a luxurious first-class compartment and be embraced by my tender-hearted family.

I passed my baccalaureate examinations without distinction—I was one of the crowd of nameless, average students. My mother was overjoyed by my success, indeed she was almost inordinately proud of it, and I felt myself surrounded by a world of consideration.

I was uncertain in my choice of a career. In order, probably, to give me time for reflection, my family decided to let me go into military training as soon as I reached the age of nineteen years. I still had six months at my disposal, which I spent traveling in England, Germany, and Austria.

In October, 1912, I presented myself to the

recruiting department. I was stripped naked. After a thorough examination, in the course of which I passed through the hands of several majors, those gentlemen pronounced me fit for service, and I was authorized to sign a contract of service with the Thirty-ninth Regiment of Infantry in the garrison at Rouen.

Chapter III

On A gray autumn day I arrived in the city where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake.

Rouen is a gloomy city, of unprepossessing appearance. The color of the houses is a dirty whitish yellow, the air is full of smoke. The city is on both sides of the Seine.

"Where are the barracks of the Thirty-ninth Regiment of Infantry, please?" I inquired.

"Straight ahead."

I came to a big, sinister-looking building which was separated from the street by an immense courtyard. A sentry, leaning carelessly on a gun, guarded the entrance. I approached him. "Is this the place where the soldiers are?" "And how," replied the man.

I entered the courtyard. Some men in clothes of a coarse material like sackcloth were clean-

ing potatoes. The guard-sergeant told someone to follow me to the office, where my identity was carefully verified, and I was conducted to the sleeping quarters.

They were not very enchanting, those sleeping quarters—forty little beds in which one would suppose there was room for but one human body, and what an odor. "Here is your bed," said the man who accompanied me, pointing to one of those tiny cots grandly designated as "beds." "The men are at drill, but will be back in half an hour."

Feeling quite alone and very miserable, I sat down. My lot did not appear to me at all enviable, and I thought that this new mode of life presented itself under the most inauspicious light possible.

I was aroused from my sad meditations by a voice with the somewhat drawling accent peculiar to the faubourgs of Paris, "Well, rookie, come here."

I was alone in the room. Evidently I was the

"rookie," and the injunction was meant for me.

I tried to find the person who had addressed me, and after a careful search I noticed an undulating heap which vaguely resembled a body concealed in one of the cots; on the pillow appeared a grayish object which looked like a very closely shaven head. From under the bedclothes an impatient voice bellowed, "Are you going to move?" I drew near to the cot. The head turned half round, and I saw a curious thin face, with sharp features, thin lips; a pair of small, piercing gray eyes examined me with interest.

The happy possessor of that charming physiognomy questioned me as to the circumstances which could have compelled me to join the army: "Was it poverty? Were you in prison? Are you just out of a house of correction?" He advanced one hypothesis after another to discover reasons which would satisfy his mind and explain the resolution I had taken, in his opinion an unfortunate step.

In order not to disappoint him, I had to invent a story—my family had forced me to enlist on pain of starvation, so I must needs take the consequences, even to death. The man nodded his head gravely, to show that he understood and sympathized with me, then he concluded:

"Your old folks hold a policeman's club over you. Well, that's a common enough story, isn't it?" I gave a sign of assent and assumed a remote, dreamy expression. "Things will straighten themselves out," he went on consolingly, "and it would be wrong for you to worry. There are plenty of kids like you." He added with a self-sufficient air, "We do just as we please; the main thing is to know how to look out for ourselves. Take me for instance." He then related the story of his love affairs.

I listened to him with attention; several times I expressed my admiration, which pleased him, and he promptly took me under his high and mighty protection.

I asked him, "Why are you in bed? Are you

sick?" There was malice in his eyes as he said, "This morning I had cow fodder. In such a case I have in reserve a little bluff which never fails —I smoke straw. That goes to my heart, but the essential thing is, you have fever, you are pale, and according to the regulations the doctor exempts you from service. There's just one drawback, and that is, at such times the doctor gives you a dose of physic. There's always a fly in the ointment. Well, that makes no difference, they leave me alone for twenty-four hours, and I take it easy." I uttered an "Oh" of admiration, to which he was not insensible.

At that moment the measured tread of marching troops was audible in the courtyard. "Those are the boys," the man said.

A voice commanded, "Halt! Break ranks." A wild clatter of running feet shook the stairway, there were shouts and the noise of bayonets, and suddenly the men rushed into the dormitory.

Stumbling over one another, all talking at

once, they came up to look me over. Complacently Demmet, the man in bed who had received me so kindly, gave them all the information with regard to me, and in a few minutes I had made many good friends. In a few days I became entirely accustomed to my new life.

A regiment is a curious cross section of humanity; in fact, it affords the best education in practical matters and in psychology that a boy can have. Every type is represented there—sons of good families, workingmen, peasants, intellectuals and bullies, fine fellows, scoundrels, fools, and people with intelligence. It is a remarkable field of study for anyone who takes the trouble to observe one's fellow creatures.

I at once won two very good friends, one named Rigaud, and the other Ricois. Rigaud, who belonged to the middle class, had no fixed profession. Ricois sold bananas and tropical fruits. They both had a keen sense of humor.

One Thursday afternoon the adjutant, who

answered to the melodious name of Begue, took it into his head to inspect our kits. Rigaud, Ricois, and I were severely criticized on that occasion by the adjutant Begue. "Ah, my gay fellows," he said, "you think you are going to Paris Saturday—you will get the devil of a disappointment. It is Begue who will tear up your leave permits and Begue gives his word for it and Begue will make you sober."

Begue never spoke of himself except in the third person. Rigaud, Ricois, and I looked right into his eyes and gazed at him fixedly without uttering a word. His sentence had put us in a serious predicament. When the inspection was over we held a council of war. "We can't allow that. We absolutely must go to Paris."

Ricois had an idea that amounted to genius. "Saturday," he said to me, "the colonel will review the soldiers. We will hide Begue's saber. He is so afraid of the colonel's jawing if he presents himself without his saber we can get

anything we want out of him by offering to give the saber back to him."

Saturday morning the regiment was assembled in the courtyard. Only Rigaud, Ricois, and I remained at the barracks—and also the adjutant Begue, who was hunting for his saber.

"*What* has Begue done with his saber?" he screamed while running up and down stairs in a frantic manner. "Begue will get a jawing from the colonel." He came into the dormitory, went out again, looked behind every door, he seemed desperate. I advanced toward him and asked in the most innocent tone, "Are you looking for something, Adjutant?"

"Thunders of God, thunders of God, Begue is looking for his saber!" Rigaud and Ricois came to the rescue, and we all three retorted in chorus, "You are looking for your saber, Adjutant? How strange! We, too—we are looking for the leave permits we have lost. Do you want us to help you find it?"

The adjutant took out his watch. "The colonel will begin his review in five minutes."

Calmly we continued in chorus, "If we find your saber, perhaps you will find our leave permits, Adjutant?"

"Anything you wish, bandits."

"Is that a promise, Adjutant?"

"Yes, it is a promise, you band of rascals."

For a few minutes we looked under the straw mattresses with conscientious care. Begue smoked, boiling over with impatience. All at once Rigaud gave a scream: "Here it is!" pointing to the ceiling. There was the saber swinging gracefully from the ceiling, where we had hung it fifteen minutes before! Begue grew crimson, then his countenance expressed the utmost stupefaction. We fetched a stool and unhooked the saber, and Begue rushed out into the courtyard. We obtained our leaves of absence.

Poor Begue was a very worthy man, no petty rascal, but he was singled out as a victim by

fate, and the most ridiculous adventures befell him with pitiless certainty.

One evening somebody announced, "Night maneuvers." Begue, at our head, took the division to a wood in the vicinity of Rouen. We were to attack a thicket supposed to be occupied by an imaginary enemy. Begue, small, slim, and dry as a prune, advanced with the step of a wolf, saber in hand, prepared to hew through the shadows. He turned to us and said in a low voice, so low we could scarcely hear him, "Form in line behind Begue." We obeyed. He moved a little way farther, assumed a ferocious manner, straightened himself, his muscles all tense, ready for a spring. "Forward!" he yelled.

In that instant Rigaud, who had been watching him for a moment, slyly slipped the butt end of his gun between Begue's legs. The unfortunate Begue, preceded by his saber, crashed into a mass of dead wood amid a tangle of iron. A peal of Homeric laughter shook the whole company. The maneuver was indisputably a fail-

ure; for if there had by chance been any enemies in the thicket they they would have been forewarned without fail.

Rigaud, Ricois, and I hastened precipitately toward the poor adjutant, who was swearing like a trooper. We helped him to rise, brushed his clothes, and handed him his saber. We bestowed upon him many tender, hypocritical attentions.

Thus our life at the barracks passed, full of relative diversions.

My sojourn in Rouen lasted only a few months. I was sent to Dieppe to join a battalion which had been detailed to that city. My stay with them was pleasant in every way.

I had hardly rejoined the company to which I belonged when I witnessed a curious spectacle. At every military station there are columns called "fire columns," which have the object of extinguishing fire whenever it breaks out. In order to train the men they were given a certain number of exercises. The august direc-

tion of these maneuvers was intrusted to a sergeant nicknamed "Bat d'Af"—a term which had been given to him because he was sent to us straight from the troops of Africa. He was a tall man, skeletonlike, and and his bearing was haughty. He took his rôle very seriously.

I was chosen to take part in one of the maneuvers directed by Bat d'Af. "Quick! The barracks are on fire!" he roared with a fixed stare. "The sleeping quarters are full of smoke, the passages and stairways are ablaze! Put your handkerchiefs in water, then stuff them into your mouths! Climb up everywhere to fasten the fire ropes to the windows—make haste! The danger is serious. You, Scapini," he said, pointing to me, "here's a broom which represents the fire pump. You go along and wave it right and left, so as to throw water on the wing of the building."

"All right, Sergeant," I said, solemnly seizing the broom, and I proceeded to go through

the movements which were to put out the fire in the wing of the building.

The men had rushed to the stairways, laughing so that they held their sides, each with a handkerchief between his teeth. They fastened a rope to the top of the building, then came down again to observe the results of the practice. All the time I kept my broom going.

"Look here," continued Bat d'Af. "When there is a fire we must sacrifice ourselves," and, pointing to the rope, he cried, "By God! The stairways are in ruins. We must get up to the window of the second story. I am going to show you how to climb up a wall."

He seized the rope which hung down from the roof and started to ascend the outer wall. He went at it so impetuously he made a false movement, and his feet missed the wall and met empty air instead.

Plunging downward, he struck a closed window, and crashing through it with sudden mo-

mentum, he landed lightly on the floor, to the accompaniment of shattered glass.

Pitilessly cruel, the men of the fire column were doubled up with convulsions of laughter. I had let go my broom from sheer exhaustion. To cap this unhappy climax, the lieutenant at the barracks, attracted by the noise, came running with great strides. Bat d'Af was at that very moment descending the stairway which a few minutes before he had described to us as burned down. The lieutenant reproached him fiercely for breaking the window, which constituted a damage to state property. Poor Bat d'Af, bleeding with countless small cuts, had a most piteous, woebegone expression. We were sent to our quarters, and for once the drill ended there.

While at Dieppe I had been introduced to a very young girl with whom I carried on a discreet, blushing courtship. Evenings I would go with her for long walks along the cliffs, and

with her hand in mine I would tell her many a love tale. It was all sentimental and silly, but it was delectable, too.

One July evening in 1914 I met my innocent little "flirt" again; but my manner was somber, preoccupied. "What's the matter with you?" she asked. "Nothing," I said, and I assumed a careless air.

I had lied impudently; for there was something heavy upon my mind. We had been told during the day that, according to an order issued by the powers that be, the men were enjoined to have their heads shaved; a "head inspection" had been announced for the morrow. I was reflecting in a melancholy mood that the uniform of a soldier of the second class was not calculated to endow a lover with alluring graces, and if besides that my head was shaved, my appearance would be enough to frighten her. At twenty we feel such things keenly. There was no pleasure in my walk, so full was my mind of the "head inspection" on the morrow.

"Everyone to his place, kepi in hand." There! the fatal hour had struck. The men lined themselves up in two sections; I was in the second line. Lieutenant Camus, short, fat, tightly girt in a stout uniform, inspected the first line with a severe eye. His kepi, which was too tight for his large head, let escape some saucy tresses, curly and provocative. From time to time the fatal sentence fell from his big mouth. "Such a one must go to the barber."

He had already inspected one half of the first line when I skillfully executed a strategic move and slipped into the first half of the first line—among those whose heads had met with judicial approval according to the regulations.

This scheme came very near succeeding, but alas! among all those men the lieutenant was looking for one in particular, and that was myself. When he was through with the second line he asked, "Where is Scapini? I haven't seen him."

Some good-natured fellow drew his attention to me. "He is here, sir."

"Here I am, sir," I affirmed. He moved nearer and, planting himself in front of me, demanded, "How does it happen that I did not see you?"

I lied audaciously. "But you did, sir, you saw me. The proof is that I was there." That was not a proof, but then——

I stood as stiffly as if I had swallowed an umbrella. I reckoned that, since the lieutenant was shorter than I and must on that account look up at me, he would have difficulty in getting a view of my precious hair, which I had taken care to smooth down with a wet towel. Alas! military heads have an inventive mind, and when the lieutenant perceived that even if he stood on tiptoe he could not see the top of my head, he ordered me roughly to bend down. I was lost. "Go to the barber," he murmured softly.

"But, sir, I have a cold. The major has advised me to keep my hair."

"Barber!" called the lieutenant, "give me the clippers." Taking that cursed instrument in his fat, round hand with short fingers, he mowed a broad swath through my hair beginning at the forehead and ending at the back.

When this vicious operation had been performed he gave the clippers back to the barber and said to me: "You will get eight days in prison to teach you how to respect our discipline. Report this evening at the guardhouse."

When I went up to the barracks I tried for a whole half hour to repair the damage done to my hair by draping the long fringe that still encircled my head over the shaven top; but alack! my calamity was irremediable.

It was the fifth day of my sentence when the man who brought my soup said, "It looks like war. Yes, war. The mobilization will be ordered to-morrow. Probably the prisoners will be set at liberty. That's a matter which concerns you."

The next day the mobilization was ordered,

and I came out of prison. There was feverish activity throughout the barracks. The mess-rooms were closed; war equipments and extra provisions were distributed among the soldiers.

Some days later the regiment was ordered to leave for an unknown destination. At dawn, with fixed bayonets, banners flying and a band playing, we marched through Dieppe in the direction of the station.

The whole population was massed in the streets, where a deathlike silence reigned. Many people wiped the tears from their eys. In the crowd was my little coquette, Mlle Prieur, very fair and very pale. When I passed in front of her she came to me and, with words and a gesture full of prayer, kissed my hand. The regiment passed on. I know of nothing in the world so moving as the departure of a regiment for the battle field.

Chapter IV

IT WAS excessively hot when, in the month of August, we alighted in the Ardennes. Limp, drenched with perspiration, the men stepped out of the overheated cars.

But, despite the fatigue of the journey, I was light-hearted. I had no conception of what war was like; I had a confused notion of it as a great, dangerous adventure in which glory went side by side with death. I felt I was contributing to the defense of my country, attacked by a nation whose formidable strength I appreciated. My mind was still full of the acclamations and the emotion shown by the crowds who had saluted us all the way from Dieppe to the Ardennes. I was far from imagining the tragic and horrible chronicle, the first page of which we were about to write.

The order was given us to reconnoiter the country; the scouts were sent forward, and the few cavalrymen who followed them soon disappeared, raising little clouds of dust as they rode away.

We had been informed that some Uhlans had been seen not far from the place where we arrived. Orders are shouted, steel is polished, guns are loaded, ready for any emergency. A tremor of excitement runs through the regiment.

We would scan the horizon and examine the openings in the woods and the entrances of villages, expecting every instant to discover an enemy whom we burned with desire to attack. Our hopes were disappointed. Nothing happened, all was quiet in the countryside. The peasants went about their business tranquilly. Not even the shadow of a German horseman did we see. After several hours of marching, the tension of our feelings lessened. On the other hand, the heat increased, and the sun beat down

upon us so mercilessly that we forgot the Germans, thinking only of our misery.

For a week we remained encamped in the Ardennes. Every day we would go through sham battles, defending ourselves or attacking an imaginary enemy, and these battles bore a strange resemblance to the maneuvers we had been in the habit of practising at home.

At that time the great French general was still unaware of the magnitude of the German offensive against Belgium. The eastern part engrossed his attention.

One afternoon we were suddenly ordered out for a forced march in the direction of Charleroi. The German plan of campaign had burst into the full light of day. From Thil-le-Château, in the Ardenes, to Jerpines, near Châtelet in Belgium—it was a triumphal march through the country. The Belgians welcomed us as liberators. Our way was "lined" with provisions—buckets of milk, buckets of wine from which the men filled their quart canteens. We quaffed

alternately the milk and the wine, which we especially enjoyed.

The people counted on us to drive back the Germans, whose presence had been reported just beyond the Sambre. This confidence made us feel sure that we were going to win. True, we had not fought yet, but this sense of anticipated success was very pleasant to us all the same.

In the course of the march I learned that we were charged with the task of occupying a town called Châtelet, and defending the passage of the Sambre. On the 17th of August we encamped in a small region, Jerpines, a distance of some kilometers from the Sambre.

The colonel of the regiment had sent out orders to extinguish all lights, and not make any noise; for, according to a statement of the intelligence department, we were close to the enemy. Toward midnight a barn in the middle of the village caught fire. Everyone sprang to his gun, thinking it was a German attack. There

was nothing of the sort, it was an accident. Little by little order was restored. For my part, I slept with one eye open.

In the morning a bugle awakened us, and we resumed our march to the Sambre. We arrived in Châtelet in the forenoon.

The town was already half evacuated by the inhabitants, the houses were nearly all deserted. Some Belgian civilian guards who met us told us that the Germans were reported ten kilometers from there. For the first time since my departure from Dieppe I sensed clearly that the situation was serious, and that there was indeed to be a fight. The bullets which, for drilling purposes, I slipped into my gun to fire at shadows in the wood would now be used with men as targets! When one is twenty, one has a very vague idea of realities, one must have actual contact with them in order to understand them completely.

The Germans only ten kilometers away—that was something definite. The regiment

gathered in the main street of Châtelet. Colonel Corin passed us on horseback at a gallop. The flag was unfurled. My company was ordered to occupy a position in the immediate vicinity of the town, in a big field bordering on the Sambre.

"Forward, charge!" commanded the colonel. "Shelter yourselves as best you can."

The company zigzagged away into the plain. When I saw the men running I could not refrain from saying to my comrade Chapuis, "Their red trousers can be seen easily—they will be fine targets for the Boches." Chapuis replied placidly, "Those who array men for war do not do it every day; besides, they are rather lacking in practical experience."

A straw rick afforded us shelter in a position which we had every reason to believe exceedingly serious. Chapuis and I occupied it, one on each side, and lying flat on the ground, finger on trigger, our eyes exploring the horizon beyond the river, we watched for the enemy. All day we waited anxiously. Waiting is very fa-

tiguing, especially in time of danger. It produces discomfort which gradually becomes agonizing, and which contracts the throat.

The day passed without a German putting in an appearance. Night came on; we were still in the field, eating biscuits. Not an enemy in sight. Some patrols were dispatched, they crossed the Sambre, scoured the region round about and returned to inform us that there was nothing out of the ordinary to report. Thus the night dragged by. At last the sun rose, embracing the horizon.

The countryside seemed dead. Toward ten o'clock there was an alarm; on the other bank of the Sambre there were men and women running, making wild gestures. They were Belgian peasants hurriedly crossing in a boat; they threw themselves into our midst pell-mell. "The Germans! the Germans!" they cried with unspeakable anguish in their eyes. The tidings flew along the line of "red trousers" like wildfire.

That was a slight excitement—a passing emo-

tion, then silence as of death. In the distance, between the trees, moved dim gray shadows. It was the Germans. They advanced man by man, concealing themselves behind tree trunks. "Fire at will upon the enemy—they are advancing!" The air was rent asunder—that was the voice of our guns.

Over there the gray shadows seemed to melt away, but in a few minutes there was a response —two or three discharges of artillery showered upon us abundantly. It is a queer sound when heard for the first time—the noise of bullets flying over one's head or striking the ground with a soft *plouf*.

Suddenly I heard a death rattle at my side and turned round. Poor Chapuis, there he lay with a bullet right through his head! He was the first to fall, and his death was the first I had ever seen in my life. A horrible agony contracted my throat—how could I help it! That was war! Yesterday he was so full of life, such a gay comrade, such a good fellow; to-day there

was nothing left of him, only a pitiful blue and red object, a face bathed in blood! What horror! I then realized all the abomination of war, and I was almost ashamed of myself for having thought there could be glory in it. I have taken part since in a number of skirmishes and battles, I have seen many dreadful things; but I have never felt anything with more poignant emotion than my first contact with the realities of war and death.

Night came on without a renewal of the German attacks. In the evening we were obliged to beat a retreat. The Germans had forcibly seized the passage of the Sambre at another point, and we were exposed to the danger of being outflanked. Things began to go badly. Our retreat lasted part of the night. In the morning on a broad plain I saw some Zouaves and Senegalese, and artillery, all helter-skelter. There was a big general, perspiring and panting, apparently in a state of extreme agitation. When

the regiment passed him he called our colonel and, pointing in the direction of the little wood of Bouffioux, he said, "We must occupy that wood and stop the Germans." We occupied the wood, but we did not stop them at all. Besides, we learned afterward from experience that men should never be run out of the trenches to attack, since the human body has less resistance than the bullet which penetrates it.

Then began the retreat of Belgium; the only scenery all the way was a road crowded with vehicles and fleeing civilians huddled pell-mell in military wagons. The civilians were fleeing, the soldiers were retreating—the distinction is a subtle one. Isolated groups joined other groups, and as we went through the villages I saw not those joyful crowds which had welcomed us with such cheering, but some tragic faces with eyes sad, unutterably sad eyes, that gazed at us as we passed.

We came to Thil-le-Baudouin, where we stopped the Germans for several hours, and

then the frontier. There was the signpost with three colors on the ground in the middle of the road, the Germans were to our right, and my heart was overwhelmed with humiliation as I thought how powerless we were to prevent their invasion. Their invasion! The enemy in my country! In a few hours they would be there; that mighty, well-organized host would invade our villages, it would sweep along the road to Paris—Paris! Oh, the anguish we felt! Oh, the dark days we lived through! We no longer heeded our physical suffering, and all the time we were not eating at all, and slept little, but we were always on the march.

At Guise a great battle ensued which resembled a picture drawn by Detaille—the Germans on one side, the French on the other. We even saw the cannon. We gained the upper hand, but I was not benefited thereby. A bursting shell—a leap in the air—a sharp pain in my thigh—a 77 shrapnel had done me honor by

exploding close to me. I was covered with blood. I picked myself up with considerable difficulty, not knowing exactly what had happened, and went limping toward an ambulance with a red cross on top of it.

The ambulance was already full of soldiers, wounded, some seriously, others slightly. Room was made for me, the wagon started, and we were taken to a provision train which for some unknown reason happened to be there at a short distance, and which was transformed into a hospital in less time than it takes to write it. Such a hospital! The cars were terribly hot, the wounded, piled one upon another, groaned and cried out. The train, packed to the utmost, crawled along slowly. The noise of artillery became more and more remote. We passed some country stations without stopping, then the train pulled into a large town, I do not now know which.

The platform was black with people who

came to look at the wounded or bring us food and drink. Everyone tried to recognize the insignia of the regiments in which he had friends or relatives. We were not hungry, only thirsty.

That short journey from station to station lasted forty-eight hours; at each depot we learned that the hospitals were already full, and that we must move on. Some men died on the way, and were taken off the train. After a while I did not pay attention to that any more.

My wounds were dressed at Domfront in the Orne. In a few days I felt much better, and I did not want to wait until I recovered completely in a little country town while my family was at Biarritz.

I decided to join them there and, with my leg dragging, made my way to the station, where I took a train going south. After countless difficulties, occasioned by frequent changes of trains, I reached Biarritz.

Biarritz—what a contrast!

There at the front was the army in retreat,

artillery, terrific firing, death, desolation, and misery. Here was a colorful city, with pretty women in the streets, and many uniforms, but handsome uniforms, uniforms with mysterious and varied insignia, which plainly showed us folk of another order that the persons who wore them would never see a battle. If they did, it would be a pity. For a world of ingenuity and art had gone into the making of those uniforms. They were as subdued and soft in color as the uniforms of the front are conspicuous. This is a curious paradox.

I do not envy the people who take part in war quietly, from the rear. As a rule they are fine men, and it would be too bad if they were killed. Their conservation is essential to the future of the race. They must realize this, for their faces are grave, preoccupied, full of importance.

A feverish activity seemed to reign in Biarritz, which had never before been so filled with people. I managed to make my way through

the crowd somehow and arrived at the hotel from which my family had addressed the last letters to me.

I entered the courtyard full of joy at the prospect of seeing them again, but the janitor informed me that my mother and grandmother had left for Cambo, a little town in the vicinity. I took another train and finally got there.

"Georges! Is it really you? We didn't know where you were. But, my poor child, how thin you are!"

My mother and grandmother were weeping, embracing me, talking together. "Oh, what clothes! You're in a terrible condition, my poor boy."

I glanced at my clothes—an overcoat full of holes, and a trouser leg torn from top to bottom. Evidently, my accouterments lacked elegance. "I have a leg wound, but it doesn't amount to anything." I pushed aside the torn cloth and showed my bandage.

I spent ten days at Cambo, going on a trip

now and then to Biarritz, where I met many friends. The reports of the war which reached us here were contradictory and vague. I knew nothing about my regiment; the Germans had received a severe check at the Marne, their march to Paris was halted.

As soon as my wound was quite healed I took the train for Paris and Rouen, where my regiment was stationed. A few days after my arrival in Rouen I went with a detachment to rejoin the Thirty-ninth Regiment at the front.

Chapter V

THE Thirty-ninth Regiment occupied a sector at Ermonville near Rheims. There I met some of my comrades, and I listened eagerly to their stories of the events which had occurred since my departure. Many of those whom I had known were dead or wounded or missing. I experienced a strange sensation when I heard this news.

Ermonville is a nice town, clean and full of gayety. The war had not wrought any serious damage there. Opposite the town, at a distance of some kilometers, rose the Fort of Brimont, imposing and threatening. It was occupied by hostile troops, who were installing some huge cannon there. From Ermonville, running beside a small country cemetery full of flowers

and poetry, a paved road goes as far as the great highway of Rheims, where the trenches began that protected that section. A little stream flows beside the road. An old mill, astride the brook, protected the guns during intervals of quiet.

I took the path to the stream to visit some comrades. I found my friends Rigaud, Ricois, Demmet, and others. I dropped into their midst while they were absorbed in a most animated discussion of an article that had appeared in *Le Matin*. It was an article by M. Charles Humbert, a senator, who demanded, with words that echoed all over France, cannon and ammunition to fill the cannon.

"Yes," screamed Rigaud, "that bunch of fools never even thought of that. No cannon! It isn't surprising that the Fritzies have pushed us as far as they have."

Ricois, quiet and conciliatory, replied, "Don't worry, they have written us everywhere that

they'll be with us Christmas. That means more than three months to wait."

At that moment they saw me. "Hold! Here's Scapin!" They all treated me like a child of Fortune, slapping me on the shoulder and punching me in the ribs.

"Look at this pilgrim," said Ricois affectionately, "he's superb! Clean! Fat! Rosy! Come now, tell us the news. The folks back there aren't too badly off, are they?"

I gave them a long account of my roundabout journeyings, to which they listened attentively.

There is hardly anything of interest to relate concerning life in the trenches. I shall not mention all the attacks in which I took part. Numerous books on war have been published, and nothing resembles a war history more than another war history.

We waited for peace, but peace never came. After our halt at Ermonville the regiment was

dispatched from the hill of Berry-au-Bac to the Ferme du Choléra. There the section was different. The spongy nature of the ground had made it impossible for us to dig trenches, and we erected a rampart with gabions and stakes along the margin of a small stream bearing the sweet, poetic name of La Miette.

Many large trees overshadowed the stream. On the other bank, opposite us, appeared the parapet of the German trenches rising from the ground. Between the lines lay scattered hundreds of dead men; there was no telling how long they had been there. It was hard to tell the Germans and the French apart. Rain, sun, and mud had left on them all a gray hue. All day long that horror was before our very eyes.

For some time that sector was quiet, but one day we lost some trenches as a result of a German attack. One of my friends, Lévêque, chief adjutant, carried on nobly, in a hand-to-hand fight, so that we might not be outflanked.

He was horribly wounded in his face. When I saw him I shivered and trembled—Lévêque was not killed, but he was blind.

After that attack I had a curious adventure. The trenches taken by the Germans were in the middle of a small wood. We were ordered to get them back. Our captain was in the dark as to the exact spot where the enemy had halted. Two volunteers were asked to reconnoiter the wood and try to locate the position of the Germans. One of my friends, Chamez, and I offered our services.

We advanced cautiously between the dense trees, holding a bayonet in one hand, so as not to make a noise, and a revolver in the other.

Suddenly I found myself face to face with two big, slashing fellows, Pomeranian grenadiers, who uttered an "Ach!" of surprise. They did not even think to hurl the grenades they held in their hands. Behind them, among the trees, appeared other gray shadows. The Pomeranian who was nearest to me seized my slicker,

which I carried in a strap. With a sudden jerk I freed myself, leaving the slicker in his possession. The man drew back a step, Chamez and I were saluted with a shower of grenades which did not hit us, and we retraced our steps as rapidly as possible.

When I reported the details of our scouting expedition to our captain he grasped Chamez's hand and mine and recommended us for a citation. I had few friends who were on the colonel's staff, and Chamez hardly knew anyone except myself; so the citation never occurred. On the other hand, Chamez and I were promoted to the high dignity of soldiers of the first class. Until that day I had supposed that this distinction was reserved for good, brave soldiers who possessed certain qualities that made them outshine all the rest. This was something of a disillusionment for me.

One day I was sent with a paper to the corporal. The general had installed himself at a château situated on the slope of Merfy, a little

way from Ermonville. The country was delightful. There were some aeroplanes that seemed to be taking a pleasure jaunt through the heavens; but the little white clouds which quickly gathered about them showed that up there nobody was enjoying himself—those were death clouds shot from the anti-aircraft guns.

I was going on my way peacefully when my attention was attracted to a strange object which was moving before me, and which was approaching. It seemed a formless mass, heavy, jolting along, with something on top of it which shone in the sun. When that object was near enough for me to distinguish the details, I perceived at once that on the summit of the edifice were a new cooking pot, brilliantly polished, a sack of immense size, and above it a blanket, then an amazing kepi, prodigiously tall. Under the kepi, and half hidden by it, appeared the head of a man dripping with perspiration. A voice which tried to be careless questioned me, "My dear fellow, is the Thirty-ninth Regiment

at Ermonville? I have been ordered to join it."

"I asked his name. "Roland Dorgeles." I did not then dream that he would be the author of the most famous and the most convincing book written about the war. He made polite inquiries about our life in the country. With equal courtesy I gave him the information he wanted, then we separated.

From Berry-au-Bac the regiment was sent to Neuville St. Vast, in Artois, under the command of General Mangin. We were piled into automobile trucks. As we went along, comments flew from one soldier to another: "There's a great attack on at Neuville; of course we are called out." "There's a fine place for the Thirty-ninth Regiment." "It's always the same fellows who get themselves killed."

In a few hours we alighted in a small rural region called Mareuil, in the vicinity of Neuville. There was a terrific cannonade going on. Some regiments were coming down from the firing line. The men were haggard, exhausted,

in rags, and they all had an inexpressible look of terror and at the same time of relief. "Everything is humming up there," they said. We went slowly on our way to Neuville.

At Mont-Saint-Eloi there was a church which had two towers that seemed to lift imploring arms to the sky. One of them was damaged. We passed the church and arrived on the height. In the twilight a tragic but magnificent spectacle lay before us. An immense plain stretched away out of sight. To the left was Neuville in flames, and the Plateau de Lorette burned bare, and two lines of trenches, one higher than the other—the German and the French lines. The whole scene looked like a drawing. Everywhere there were flashes and explosions; from time to time a column of blazing rockets ascended into the darkening heavens.

After traversing a considerable number of ditches and trenches, with many detours, we came to the main street of Neuville. We occu-

pied one side and the Germans the other. The people hid behind walls in cellars.

I suffered cruel anguish in this region which was strange to me, where I had come in the dead of night. Gradually the noise of artillery subsided, and, except for a few gunshots, the rest of the night was undisturbed. In the morning a rain of shells of large caliber poured upon us. Toward noon there was a lull. General Mangin came to visit us. Red kepi, oak-leaf badge, and an energetic face betraying no feelings except a tenacious will. In his brigade his luck was proverbial, and his presence inspired the men with courage. He scorned death and danger. Truly he looked and was a great leader. Mangin went into the most dangerous places, the shells and bullets seemed to respect him. Nothing made him bow his head. When one of his artillery officers bent forward because of a shell which tore its way through the air there was an almost imperceptible gleam of irony in the

general's eye. Consequently the artillery officer did not bow any more when a shell passed him. Mangin's courage produced a deep impression upon everybody.

I do not want to describe the horrors of the siege of Neuville, I do not even want to remember anything about it. I was slightly wounded there, but I was looked after on the spot.

Our stay in that region was an uninterrupted series of small skirmishes and big attacks. The band of my friends, already reduced in number, continued to dwindle—some were killed, others sent away, and others made prisoners.

I requested permission to join the division of pursuit planes.

In August I was granted a leave of absence —a period of relaxation, or as it is called, *"une permission de détente."* When I received this good news I had but one anxiety—to escape being killed or wounded before I left, so that for a few days I might get some peace, at least taste the comfort of a normal existence, far from

the muddy trenches, far from the necessity of facing death, invisible but ever present.

At the station there were men from different regiments gathered together. I have never seen such genuine joy as was manifested on the platform at that little station. A leave of absence! Happiness is so essentially relative, and human nature responds so readily to immediate events that it seemed to us as to many others that the war was over. The thought that in a week we should have to go back to that life of hell never even crossed our minds! For us those eight days seemed an eternity. We were all aquiver with joy to think we should be with the living—real human beings—men and women with the breath of life in them, and not with all those who aspired to die. Besides, it seemed to us that the living owed much to us. We felt that on our faces was written the record of duty well done, that the men who had risked nothing and suffered not at all would look upon us as their saviors. It was *we* who had turned aside that

whirlwind of German steel, thus saving others' lives. These feelings, more or less vaguely expressed, were in all our hearts. The train started. So, then, it was true—we were going to Paris!

Chapter VI

AT THE station what a swarm of soldiers on leave and civilians and women! I was jostled and pushed along, and I found myself on the pavement, completely lost.

Paris—yes, I was in Paris. That ought to have made me happy, but no! To my way of thinking, the crowd passed me with too much indifference. I had not been able to let my family know when I would arrive, as I had not got the date of my furlough in advance. I stopped a carriage and gave my address, 14 Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

When I arrived at the house my heart grew warm. I rang the bell, the maid opened the door. "Is Madame in?" I asked. The maid ran back into the parlor crying, "Madame, here's M. Georges!" My grandmother was overcome

with emotion, her eyes filled with tears. My mother came in also, and they both embraced me. I am not very emotional, but such demonstrations are very sweet to me all the same.

I had to talk about my new life. Every now and then my grandmother interrupted me. "Poor darling! My poor boy!" she would exclaim, wiping her eyes. However, I passed lightly over the sufferings we had endured, and persistently dwelt on the glory of war, which I forced myself to idealize, in spite of my conscience, as much as possible. Were we not unhappy enough down there in the trenches without spoiling our momentary release by making those who loved us wretched with a recital of our miseries?

Once more I saw the friends of my family. In the days which followed I was assailed with questions. Everyone I met inquired, "You have, then, seen the Huns? Have you killed any?"

These questions, precise and showing great

interest, had a way of irritating me. I replied that in the present war we seldom saw the Germans face to face. Had I killed any of them? I knew nothing about it, and I didn't especially care to know. We fired upon them without seeing them, we fired without much enthusiasm, without hatred or obstinacy to speak of, we fired only because our sense of duty and the instinct of self-preservation compelled us to.

When I replied in this wise the members of the respectable bourgeoisie who had been ready to welcome me as a hero felt rather disappointed, and in their suspicious eyes I read the diagnosis, "A fellow of poor spirit." Evidently there are two kinds of patriotism, one expressed in words, and a patriotism like ours—embodied in actions.

The patriots of the first type, who were particularly numerous at the rear, were specialists in a verbal heroism which flowed in abundance. How many heroes of this sort I have met whose activity never passed beyond the limits of Chan-

tilly, and who, with touching *naïveté,* told tales which were enough to make the most hardened person shriek! One could not but be full of admiration for the blushing modesty with which they expatiated upon the part they had played in their drama.

The other kind of patriotism was not vociferous, but showed itself in deeds, and was modest enough to be silent.

Some worthy people in the ordinary walks of life took me by the shoulders and said delightedly: "How well you look! You are splendid! Look here, is it not still true that life in the open is just the thing for one? Obviously, obviously . . ."

How I should have liked to have those flatterers with round bellies take a short cure in the trenches which they considered so hygienic.

I went on a very short trip to Dieppe to find my little coquette of days gone by, so slender and pretty. She was very happy to see me. She loved me with all the warmth of her young

heart. I returned to Paris so as to spend the last days of my furlough with my relatives.

As I had asked for a post in the aviation corps, I ordered a very nice uniform with the regimental colors and handsome boots, so that I might get ready more quickly in case the order for my transfer to the new post should reach the regiment before I did. When my new garments were delivered I dressed up and paraded, proud and happy, up and down the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne.

During my leave of absence a strange thought came into my mind. One day, while walking with my grandmother, I said to her, "I hope I shall be an aviator; but if by any chance my hope should be unfulfilled, or deferred too long, I have a presentiment that something terrible will happen. For us who serve in the infantry there are not three ways to escape, only two things can happen to us: death or a severe wound. I don't think I shall be killed. So there is left only the second event to imagine. I have

a physical horror of mutilation. The thought of it is detestable. The disaster that seems least to be dreaded would be a wound in my face which would not disfigure me—loss of sight, for instance. I have traveled, I know many things, and it seems to me I could easily picture them in my mind. I would wear a mask according to the Venetian style and walk about as in a masquerade, while mentally I gazed upon the world of my imagination. That wouldn't be so very unpleasant."

"But, Georges, you are being foolish! Keep still, I beg you," said my grandmother, her throat tightening a little. One day fate would mete out to me a penalty for the folly and pride of my imaginings. There are great forces the laws of which we do not know, and which rule over us with implacable rigor. We have no right to undervalue our happiness—that is one of the laws we should know.

I went back to the front. The car I was in was full of soldiers on leave returning to their

regiments. Until the moment when the train left Paris, none of us had believed that we should really go back. Such is the lightness and superficiality of the human mind. Now the fact stared us in the face. We chatted together, boasting and swaggering and giving our holiday impressions. He won the prize who had had the most extraordinary adventures. Don Juan himself would have turned pale with envy just to hear us! Suddenly a man, leaning toward the door, turned to us making a sign to listen. Through the night, far off, a dull rumble was audible. Our narratives were abruptly broken off, we were again plunged into reality. Soon the train stopped. Some comrades and I took the road to the village where we knew we should find the Thirty-ninth Regiment.

We were in the trenches for some days. My captain, a brave and courteous man, had intrusted to me the command of a troop of seventeen men. Having inquired whether anything had come of my request to be admitted to the

aviation corps, I learned that there had as yet been no response. Dorgeles, who had made a similar request at the same time I did, was summoned before the colonel and came back full of joy. "I am to go to Dijon soon," and he added consolingly, "You'll hear from them any minute. In any case, being on the spot, I'll put in a word for you."

"Tell me now," I said to him, "you have never told me what you would call the book you are writing. I don't know if you have any talent; but you have certainly been in a position to take notes on war as it really is."

Leaning over me with an air of mystery, he answered, "The subject is the whole question of war—what it is like, its evolution, its significance, and its purpose. I shall call my book *The Wooden Crosses.*"

Dorgeles grasped my hand warmly and ran off to attend to the preparations for his departure.

There was a confused rumor going the

rounds of the regiment that on the 25th of September the whole army was to move in the direction of the Bois de la Folie, above Neuville, and attack the enemy. One day the various regiments formed in a square and the general who was at the head of our division inspected our ranks. He gathered together the officers and sub-officers. "To-morrow at dawn," he declared, "you will go out into the open, with your guns slung at your backs. The artillery will be fixed so that you may pass over the German trenches without having to fire a single shot. You will have only dead bodies confronting you."

That night there was a deafening uproar—a deluge of steel and fire. Our artillery spat death from every muzzle. In the morning we started. Alas! The dead confronting us were decidedly alive. Scarcely had we reached the plain when a storm of steel made bloody gaps in our ranks. Although greatly reduced in numbers, we took the first line of German trenches.

That evening, gathered in a German shelter,

we played cards by the wavering light of a candle. The division lieutenant and all the officers of the troop were there. The opening of our hiding place was concealed by a piece of canvas. A German officer, stretched on a camp cot, was slowly dying.

Suddenly the canvas was pulled aside on the outside, revealing a patch of black sky. A head appeared in that patch of sky, and a voice called, "Lieutenant Pottery, the captain wants you."

The lieutenant rose and went out. A few minutes later he returned with a very pale face. "We need a small force to take a German barricade located very near here in the ditch. Whose turn is it to go?"

We looked at one another. "It is group No. 11 that is wanted. It is your turn, Scapini."

"All right," I said, "we shall carry only guns and grenades."

"Just as you say."

I clasped the hands of my friends, who could

hardly let go mine, and went to look for my men who lay scattered about in the trench. In a few words I explained to them what I wanted: "Grenades ready in your hands. Four men will go forward with me, the others will follow. When we get near the barricade, at my command we all five are to hurl our grenades together upon the Germans. The others will go over on all fours, and that will be all.

Everything was done as I had planned. Having cleared the barricade, we advanced a short way into the ditch, and until dawn we had to repel the assaults of a foe determined to recover what we had wrested from them.

I will now leave the narrative to my comrade-in-arms and friend, Dorgeles, who published an article on this incident in a newspaper, *L'Intransigeant.* I do not possess his gift of description.

"1915. . . . The September campaign was on which was to take from the enemy every ad-

vantage they had won. Picture to yourself those gloomy trenches at Artois, where we had been fighting four months, the ruins of Neuville, the Road of the Pylônes and those dismantled towers of the church of Mont-Saint-Eloi which guided our relief troops.

"Only eight days before the attack some fine new helmets had been distributed among the soldiers, and Scapini had tied a large checked handkerchief under his helmet to protect his neck; for the sun was intensely hot. It was thus that he left Ecoivres with the grenadiers of the first company. The last picture which his comrades have retained of him in their memories is the image of a soldier twenty years old, sitting astride a barricade, who occasionally wiped his face with the corner of a checked handkerchief. All night long we saw him there, astride his sandbags. When the Germans made a counter-attack, and a tempest of shells burst upon us, it was he who took command of the grenadiers, as his sergeant had been killed.

"'Foolhardy, Scapin!' growled his comrades. He was called Scapin by everyone in the regiment, just as I was called Dorgelot. But Scapin, who kept joking with us, never stirred from his post.

"In the morning the Germans renewed their counterattack furiously, courageously, to retake their trenches. Another wave rushed upon the barricade, where Scapini and his men still offered resistance, and one of the men in gray —an officer without doubt—fired a revolver point-blank upon the defender.

"Scapini received a terrible blow on his head. Everything swam before his eyes, then all was dark. He had time to think, 'Now I've got mine,' but that was only for a second.

"The instant that the dying youth perceived that the firing had ceased he pulled himself together; clinging fast to his barricade, he righted his position. 'For God's sake don't give up! More grenades! More grenades!' he cried. Groping in his knapsack, the bleeding, blind

hero took out his last projectiles, and with a sweeping gesture flung them into that dread night which had just closed upon him. Terrified, the Germans withdrew."

I felt an awful pounding inside my head which was worse than the pain.

Here comes the dawning day, blurred by a red cloud which grows redder and redder, thicker and thicker. It is a scarlet night—I see nothing more. I raise my hand to my face. It is sticky. Blood, blood, and always blood! I have not yet lost consciousness. My brain is clear, I reason thus, "It must be an internal hemorrhage, that is why I see nothing but red. I shall probably die. I have no regrets, no fears."

Decidedly, human nature is well equipped for all emergencies. We fear death as long as it does not touch us; but when the possibility of dying becomes an immediate certainty it does

not seem at all terrible. Seconds pass which seem like hours.

I did not die. Two men carried me off the field, and as I was very weak, one of them wanted to lift me upon his shoulder. His intention was commendable, but the consequences were unfortunate—my head and neck appeared above the trench, and the Germans near by made me a target, the bullets whistled round me.

"I prefer to get down and walk," I said to the man, who let me slide to the ground. Oh, the potency of the instinct of self-preservation! I thought I was on the point of dying, and yet I would not take any needless risk.

Why was it that a childish idea flashed into my mind at that very moment? I made a violent effort and pulled off my dirty, muddy overcoat, just to die in a clean and neatly tailored uniform. I dared not confess my thought to my comrades, I simply said, "It's too heavy."

We walked some kilometers in the ditch. All my comrades who saw me wanted to put their arms about me. They loved me well, which was a great comfort. At last my small escort met some litter bearers who put me on a stretcher and carried me to the camp hospital. I recognized a familiar voice—the voice of Dr. Legros, an army surgeon.

"Doctor, where am I? Tell me everything. You know I am not a child. You can depend upon that."

His fingers touched my face lightly. There was silence, then he said in a voice that he tried to keep calm and reassuring, "Your left eye is gone, the right one is perforated. I do not think it is a case of cerebral hemorrhage. Your wound ought not to be mortal. As to your sight . . ." He did not finish his sentence.

"Very well," I said, "give me a pencil and a card." Judging as best I could the lines and the spacing, I wrote out some words on the card and addressed it to my family. I had to reas-

sure them and prepare them for the cruel blow they must endure.

My wounds were dressed, I was placed in an ambulance and taken to the eye clinic at Hesdain, where they gave me chloroform.

I awoke with a cruel pain in my head, but I was so weary I did not feel as if I had any strength to suffer. Forty-eight hours later I was carried in a hospital train to Paris, where I was taken to the Hôtel-Dieu.

I had a telephone message sent to my mother and grandmother to let them know that I was there. Hoping to cheer them up when they came, I asked to have an omelet brought to me as soon as their arrival was announced. In a few minutes the omelet was brought in. I wanted to weep when I thought how grieved my grandmother and mother would be. They entered just as I was cutting up my omelet, pretending to be ravenous, but without much heart for food. The news of my misfortune must have been

broken to them, for I sensed the superhuman effort they made not to cry. They embraced me so tenderly, so sadly, that my heart almost burst, and some red tears fell beneath my bandage.

PART II

Chapter I

IT IS time for you to have a fresh bandage, M. Scapini." Deft hands unfastened the pins quickly and undid the strips of cloth. When my face was uncovered I asked, "Is the sun shining?"

"Yes."

"Place me facing it." The nurse took me to the window. I opened my eye and shut it promptly. "I keep seeing a trembling gleam," I said. I had a persistent illusion that I saw a gleam; I wanted to keep on hoping that it would grow brighter, and that some time I might again see just a little. With the nurse's assistance I went back to my bed.

I had been at the Hôtel-Dieu a month. Prof. Delapersonne, head physician, evaded all the questions I put to him, and I had no way of

knowing what he thought of my case. Was it hopeless, or was it not? I was utterly in the dark as to my condition.

Every day friends, and even people whom I knew only slightly or not at all, took their turn sitting by my bedside. They had learned of my calamity, and comforted me with an affection which was genuine. I was showered with flowers, sweets, and dainty gifts.

As a matter of fact, I did not suffer from the new condition in which I found myself. I had a dim notion that when I again took up the life which had been mine, the normal life of the world, I should be at grips with a multitude of difficulties, but I had hardly any idea of what they were. I was not even sure that I should encounter them, I considered them as possible, but not certain. I had such vitality, such confidence in myself!

I had not had any news of my little coquette in Dieppe, which surprised me. I had written her a few lines—rather crooked lines at that—

to prepare her gently for the shock. I had shown the sheet of paper to the nurse, holding it away carefully, so that she could not read the words. I asked her, "Do the lines not run into each other too much?" Her answer was in the negative, the letter was sent, and I had been waiting ever since.

One afternoon Mlle Prieur was announced. "Let her come in," I said quickly. The nurse went out. Again the door opened. "Good-afternoon, Evelyn." It was not Evelyn, it was Marie-Louise, her sister.

Ah! Marie-Louise told me that Evelyn had been prevented from coming to Paris, and how sorry she was, and so forth—just words. Marie-Louise and I were both a bit bored. I was in a hurry to have the visit over with. She had some errands to do; she kissed me kindly and took her leave.

After her departure I felt very much alone. Since then I have read in Henry Bataille's *Divine Tragedy* two verses which have a lin-

gering, human sadness that has often made me think of my experience:

> "In her soul dwelt not the constancy
> That withstands absence."

This was my first disillusionment, my first contact with the new realities of my existence. I had little inclination to rebel against my lot—that was already a thing of the past, I must not let myself think of it any more.

That day I had a call from a young man with a big, warm heart who had been without sight since he was five years old. He was a lawyer who held a position at the Court of Appeals in Paris. He had carried on all his studies in darkness, and now he was an advocate pleading the cause of others in court. There was nothing gloomy about him. I was cheered by his conversation. His visit did me a great deal of good.

Some time afterward Dr. Delapersonne came to see me. He took my hand gently and said, "You are now nearly well. Your mother

and grandmother have asked me to let you go home and recuperate. I gave my consent gladly. The war is over for you. In a few days you are to present yourself at the Place de Paris; there you will be under the care of a medical board whose treatments will build you up. Here is a letter explaining your case; you are to hand it to the head physician of the Institute."

"But, Doctor," I objected, "have I lost my sight forever?"

"We cannot tell—perhaps later—much later." With these words Dr. Delapersonne left the room. I slipped the letter under my pillow and thought to myself, "Not at all encouraging."

The next day my mother came for me, and, taking her arm, I awkwardly descended the hospital stairs and found myself in the street. What a curious impression I had as I felt people passing to the right and to the left! There was a sky over my head and a sidewalk under my feet; there were carriages which left

wheel marks on the street. I knew all these things existed, I had seen them, and now I saw nothing! My blindness was indeed a fact, and I had to feel its black realities to believe it. I was a little dizzy. I shrugged my shoulders. Well! Not being able to see was something to which I had accustomed myself.

My mother took my hand, and we got into a carriage. All the time we were riding I did not speak a single word until we reached home. I had scarcely entered when I bumped into a chair. I shall remember forever the first chair I bumped into in my own home, it was disheartening. That was to be my life—bumping into chairs! That is not a serious matter in itself—it looks silly; but it is exasperating to bump into a chair when it is so easy to avoid it, provided one can see! Yes, but that was precisely my trouble, I could not see. Such helplessness! My mother must have guessed my thoughts; for she stroked my hair tenderly and clasped me in her arms.

It was true, then—I could not go anywhere by myself? Must I have a guide? Must somebody accompany me everywhere? I must take a young boy between thirteen and fifteen years old as an attendant?

My mother and grandmother were much disturbed over this problem of getting a guide. The next day they brought a little fellow named Emil to see me. He impressed me as a nice, well-bred boy, and I engaged him. He was instructed to tell me faithfully all that he saw, and describe to me the passers-by and the goings-on in the street. Emil was intelligent, and he performed this duty precisely and conscientiously. In a very short time he understood that the details of people's clothes interested me as much as their faces and gestures. He came to observe everything with the eye of a painter and give me descriptions of a gripping reality.

One morning Emil found on my table the letter which Dr. Delapersonne had given me, addressed to the head physician of the Insti-

tute. "We are to go there," I said. But on the way I was seized with an insane desire to know what was in the letter. Certainly Dr. Delapersonne would write down his exact diagnosis without disguise for the head physician of the Institute. That envelope contained the truth about my case. What could it be? I held out the letter. "Open it, Emil."

"But, monsieur——"

"Open the letter, I say." Emil tore open the envelope and spread out the sheet of paper.

"Read now."

"But, monsieur——"

"Read what is written under the heading, 'Diagnosis.'" Emil read aloud with what seemed to me an agonized voice, "Total and definitive blindness."

"All right, hand it back to me. Let us go back home. You will take the letter to-morrow. There is no use in my going there in person."

One of my old friends, Ottent, had had a bullet wound in his face about the same time

that I was stricken. The injury was considerable. He had been in the hospital when I was there, and he had come out almost at the same moment that I had. At the front he had carried on magnificently. Ottent came to see me often, and, though he never spoke of his emotions, I felt his deep friendship and understanding.

We went out together with friends who were on leave, and aviators who flew to Paris. I was petted, watched over, spoiled, even admired. The women, especially, were good, sweet, and tender to me. I felt that they were trying to make me forget the cruelty—or what seemed to them the cruelty of my fate. That period of my life passed swiftly, in a whirl. I acquired some dexterity in my movements, and I can say that my injury weighed but lightly upon my spirit. How grateful I am to my friends (many of them were afterward slain by the enemy) for helping me to forget!

I was constantly obsessed by a fixed idea—the desire to appear normal, so that those who

met me or lived side by side with me would not be conscious of my blindness. I ought to say that I succeeded in some measure.

My mother and grandmother often advised me to work at something, to learn Braille. Braille! Was I to be the only one among all those people who knew it! I had never heard anybody speak of it! A special mode of writing, meant only for those who could not see! An assemblage of dots representing letters and groups of letters! I felt a physical shrinking at the thought of reading with my fingers, I could not help thinking of it after I had been taken to the circus to see an armless man who painted pictures with his toes. It was impossible for me to separate these two ideas. To-day I confess my stupidity. I obstinately refused to learn the Braille system which has since meant so much to me. With great reluctance I consented to learn how to use a typewriter.

With the appearance of the first blinded soldiers, the Americans had perceived some things

which these wounded men did not yet realize. The Americans, being of a practical turn of mind, had taken into account the fact that the new situation in which some men would suddenly find themselves would change all the conditions of their existence, that it would be necessary to help them adapt themselves to their new environment, make it possible for them quickly to replace, even if only imperfectly, what they had lost.

An organization had been formed at the Hôtel Crillon under the direction of Miss Holt* with the object of reëducating the blinded soldiers. Some ladies would go to the homes of such men and escort them to the hotel, where instruction was given. Emil took me there every morning and left me with Mlle de Mazery, whose task it was to teach me the use of the typewriter.

*Miss Winifred Holt, now Mrs. Holt-Mather, founder of the New York Association for the Blind and of the "Lighthouse." It was she who opened the fifth, sixth, and seventh Lighthouses for the blind in France.

Mlle de Mazery was charming, extremely intelligent, spiritual. There was something earnest and childlike about her. Her personality pleased me, and I took great interest in the lessons she gave me. As Emil said, she was very graceful, and had pretty ways, and dressed with quiet elegance. Emil was fifteen years old, and his taste was excellent.

In a short time I learned how to write on the machine. I thanked Mlle de Mazery for her kindness to me.

I was in the habit of going every morning to the Bois de Boulogne, guided by the faithful Emil. That urchin amused me; his reflections on women were delightful. When I noticed that someone with an agreeable perfume passed by I would ask, "Emil, who is that?"

Emil would answer gravely in his small, sweet voice, "Not bad looking—her outline is pretty enough, but she has on cotton stockings." In Emil's eyes cotton stockings were a repre-

hensible vice—a sure sign of neglect of one's appearance.

At other times he would inform me with confusion that the features of a young person who passed us had escaped his notice. In such a case he would say to me, "Monsieur, I can run ahead and take a good look—without showing it, of course—and come back to tell you how she looks."

After the boredom of my first attempts to start life afresh, I felt very gay, and with the help of my eyes, that is to say, Emil, I keenly enjoyed life. I decided to rent a small apartment—a sitting room, a bedroom, and bath. There Emil combined the duties of valet, bath attendant, maître d'hôtel, and in addition he cooked breakfast. Our life was jolly. I had some delightful adventures which natural discretion forbids me to relate. In the midst of my rather topsy-turvy life Emil moved, smiling and imperturbable.

But he was mixed up in an occurrence in which his rare quality of initiative played an important rôle. I was on the best terms with a young artist afflicted with a suspicious, jealous comrade who was very particularly interested in her education. One day I had gone out in all honor to call on that young woman. Somebody rang the bell at the main entrance. Emil had received some instructions. Sitting in the antechamber, absorbed in the tales of Sherlock Holmes, he sprang up when he heard the bell, and rushed into the parlor where I was, and said briefly, authoritatively, "Monsieur, there is the door bell."

My friend, somewhat troubled, pushed me toward a door, saying, "Go in, go in there," and in less time than it takes to write it I found myself with Emil in a sort of closet. In a low voice I asked, "Where are we, Emil?"

"In a cloakroom, monsieur."

"What's that thing pressing down on us?"

"Coats, monsieur."

At that moment I made a rather imprudent gesture, there was a soft thud; a smothered voice called, "Monsieur, I'm choking! I'm choking under the coats."

The fact was, the coats had fallen down from the hooks, and poor Emil had fully a dozen of them on top of his head. Somehow or other, without making any noise, I helped him to extricate himself. We waited anxiously, listening with all our ears.

"Monsieur!"

"What, Emil?"

"Listen, he is playing on the piano."

"I hear him, Emil! He should have chosen a different time." We remained shut up in there about an hour and fifteen minutes, and were at last liberated by the maid. Emil and I were as red as boiled lobsters, half asphyxiated. In desperation Madame had carried Monsieur off, fearing that if our stay in the cloakroom was prolonged we would die for want of air. Emil and I smoothed out our clothes, somewhat

mussed by the mishap with the coats, and went downstairs.

"Life is full of surprises, monsieur," said Emil when we got out on the street.

That sort of life, which kept me perpetually "on the go," was fatiguing, and took all the vitality out of me. Besides, I had not sufficient means to live that way any longer. It was necessary for me to think of the future, but I did not have the courage to do it. I realized that I was a bit cowardly; but I patted myself on the back saying, "When one has been injured like me—well."

My nerves were all on edge. I remember that one day I was seized with a fit of anger because a taxi driver had treated me rudely. As the man had left his seat to insult me all the more, I alighted also, and I reflected a second; I calculated nicely, determined exactly the point from which his voice came, and with a blow right on his jaw I sent him rolling on the pavement, to the utter stupefaction of Emil, who could only

think of this simple phrase, "Well done, monsieur."

My anger subsided at the same moment that the man fell, and I could not help laughing as I thought of the comic element in the situation.

I meditated upon this incident a long time. I, a disabled soldier, as everyone could see, had been insulted by a fellow while the war was still on! Why? By that time there were a great many disabled soldiers. People were becoming accustomed to the sight of them, and were beginning to forget. Forgetfulness is a very human trait, I must reckon with it, I must tell myself that the war would be over some time, that, thank God, men would stop butchering one another, and that then the disabled would be nothing more than invalids, exciting pity, perhaps sympathy. The halo of glory in which the crowd beheld them would fade as the years passed. I should then be simply a man like the rest, and not only that, but a man whose value was di-

minished by an injury that would be looked upon merely as an infirmity.

At that thought my whole being revolted. I would not have that happen for all the world, but it was not enough for me to say "I don't want that," I must do something—what? I did not brood long on this question. Soon afterward I left for Deauville, where I had been invited by one of my friends. I made the trip in a magnificent Rolls-Royce. On arriving at Rouen we found the quay blocked by a demonstration of strikers. When they saw the car the stupid crowd yelled, "Away with the profiteers! Throw them into the Seine." Great heavens! In what way were we profiteers? I got out of the car, I was in uniform, I wore some decorations; but all that made no impression whatever upon the strikers, who continued to yell, "Away with the profiteers! Throw them into the water!" We passed only after the police had given us their protection. This second incident compelled me again to think about my future destiny.

In the meantime I had the sorrow of losing my grandmother, who died during the year 1917. My poor grandmother had always been uneasy about my future, and since I was disabled, her uneasiness had grown into a haunting fear. I had done nothing to relieve her anxiety; in spite of her exhortations I had not done any work. I was ashamed of myself. I had not given her who so dearly loved me the satisfaction of seeing me succeed in something worth while. I was full of deep remorse, and, reaching out with my soul beyond this life, I promised her that I would turn over a new leaf and make something of myself.

Chapter II

IT WAS only after the death of my grandmother that I understood my real situation, considered it seriously and studied the possibilities of taking my life in my own hands and directing it in a fitting manner.

As a man with all his faculties journeys through life his mind is diverted by all that he sees, people and things. He does not appreciate the fact that the objects he distinguishes, often without paying the least attention to them, bring nourishment and entertainment to his mind. The sights of every day that seem commonplace to him, without interest, have an influence upon him of which he is not often aware.

I, too, had seen for twenty years without appreciating the blessings of sight, and now that I lived in the dark, what would I not have given

to get back all that had appeared to me without significance while I took it for granted! Some people have said to me by way of consolation, "Bah! since you are blind you escape the sight of many ugly things." I think that the first time I heard this remark I could have killed the person who said it.

The human mind must be diverted. That is essential to its equilibrium, and for this purpose the eyes are very important. Now, my sight was quenched forever. I had only to think of this to realize that I must find some means of retrieving my loss. The instinct of self-preservation roused me to action. I was perfectly aware that unless I made a sufficiently vigorous effort to maintain my physical and moral equilibrium I should fall into a kind of lethargy from which I could not possibly free myself.

I looked straight at the circumstances of my changed life, resolved to throw overboard all the foolish scruples which had prevented me from learning Braille, and undertook to ac-

quire the art of reading with my fingers. It was not long before I got so that I could read slowly and write. Alone, shut up in my room, I began reading a book. I noticed, however, a curious feeling of shame—although it was possible for me to read in solitude, I tried in vain, even with superhuman effort, to read when anyone, even my mother, was present. A strange shyness seized me as soon as a third person appeared on the scene. The signs at my finger tips had no shape in my brain, they meant nothing. I forced myself to tackle this difficulty and conquer my embarrassment, and little by little, at the cost of tremendous endeavor, I quickly became expert in writing, and gained a certain amount of speed in reading. This was a revelation to me, and I felt immensely proud of having overcome the obstacles in two essential departments of reëducation—reading and writing.

At bottom, there is nothing very extraordinary in being able to read and write in Braille. That system is an assemblage of conventional

signs, embossed characters which have a particular meaning only because it has been assigned to them. Men have formed the habit of reading with their eyes because they have eyes; but the Braille system springs from the same principle; the sense of touch replaces vision, and that is all. It is as logical to give a special meaning to embossed characters as to give it to characters in ink print.

I had, then, pushed aside some of my difficulties and was ready to begin work. At that time I undertook a round of visits to all the friends of my family to find a job.

On this occasion I gained a rapid but complete acquaintance with life. Everybody promised to help me along, and positively declared that something would be found for me. As a matter of fact, they did nothing. It was then that I understood life as it really is. The Armistice had been signed some time ago, the war was already a matter of the past, and in the future I must not count on anyone but myself.

It was imperative that I should find a profession which would not require anybody's patronage, at least not in the beginning. I knew of but one such profession—the practice of law. Consequently, I decided to become a lawyer. I inquired about the formalities to go through and the examinations to take. I bought the books necessary for my studies and begged a law professor to initiate me into the legal mysteries.

I liked my work. Taking all in all, what I was trying to do opened new horizons to me, and I made up my mind to organize my life in a rational manner by using to the utmost the faculties I still possessed.

I learned to ride horseback. At first I had some queer experiences; but one or two falls without any serious consequences contributed to my discipline, so that I soon felt quite at home in the saddle. I went out into the woods a great deal with only a groom as escort. At first the worthy man, wide awake to his respon-

sibility, insisted vigorously that I should let him guide the horse with a leading rein. I stubbornly refused, and I must say that all went finely. On horseback I had a sense of absolute self-reliance. I knew of no such joy as to be able to go out free from the restraint of an arm in mine. This experience in riding was decisive—I no longer doubted that I should regain my independence.

Ever since my childhood I had been a good swimmer. One day I went with some friends to a pool, and to their great surprise I plunged right in with perfect ease, trusting only to instinctive reactions.

I also rode a bicycle, skated, and did a little fencing. To keep myself reasonably healthy, I mustered enough will power to do Swedish exercises every morning, and I had a cross bar put up in my bathroom.

Learning Braille had suggested to me the idea of playing cards. That ought not to be impossible, it seemed to me. I looked about to

see if there were any special games for the blind. There were some, but they were complicated and not easy to follow. I imagined something else which suited me better, and I began to play simple games. I had always heard that bridge was a noble game, and I had someone teach me the rules. I quickly "got the hang of it," and I soon could play respectably. All I had to do was to have them name the cards that made up the dummy; each partner told me what card he had played. By means of these little devices I learned to play as quickly and easily as they did, and without getting very tired.

I did not neglect my law studies, and when the time came for the first examination I passed successfully. I confess that I felt a certain pleasure in going back to school. There are three law examinations with a year's interval between them. I was in a hurry to be admitted to the bar, and I asked the minister of public instruction if the period could be shortened. He granted my request, I was authorized to take

those three examinations in one year. That was a clear gain of two years. I was fortunate enough to succeed, and I was admitted to the bar in Paris.

All that time my faithful Emil never left my side. It was he who stood by me when one day I presented myself in a black robe and plaited necktie, at the first chamber of the Court of Appeals of Paris to take the oath. I was now a lawyer, I had a profession.

I had never spoken in public, and I confess I was a little nervous at the thought of doing it. At the bar in Paris every lawyer who is just beginning is enrolled among those who render *"assistance judiciaire,"* that is, he pleads for poor clients without charging them a fee. This custom is a good thing, not only for those of small means who can thus be represented without payment, but also for young lawyers who thereby gain an apprenticeship at the bar. I therefore took up the work of *assistance judiciaire.*

One morning Emil entered my chamber saying, "Monsieur, here is a letter asking you to plead the cause of Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali, who is in the Prison de la Santé for 'drunkenness and brawling.' "

I obtained a permit to communicate with my client, and was admitted into a small cell, where the warden asked me to wait for Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali. He came. He was an Arab, a poor hero who, when he was at home one evening, had fought with a fellow countryman—a case neither serious nor interesting. I was to present his case some days afterward.

I entered the Palais de Justice with a solemn, preoccupied air, as if the life of an innocent person depended upon my eloquence. I kept saying to myself, "Be calm, be very calm." I met some friends, brother lawyers, who asked where I was going. "I am going to plead for a prisoner," I answered carelessly.

"Is this the first time you have appeared in court?"

"Yes."

"We will go with you."

We entered the courtroom.

"Very few people here," said Emil in my ear.

"All the better," I thought. Different cases were brought up, then came mine. I had carefully prepared a certain number of arguments which seemed to me of a nature to move the tribunal, and I was reviewing them in my mind when the name of Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali was pronounced. At that very moment my brain became a blank, while my heart beat wildly. With a violent effort I rose and began. I told a short story, bringing out only one point—not at all the kind of plea I had prepared, and in which Sidi Mohamed Ben Ali was to play a touching part. I had but one wish—to finish very quickly. I felt ridiculous, and suffered terribly. I sat down. The president addressed a few friendly words to me, and, probably out of courtesy, acquitted my client.

Ashamed and wretched, I went out on Emil's arm, swearing that I should never again plead in court.

"Well, Emil, what did you think of it?"

"It was not a distinguished affair, monsieur."

"Not at all, Emil." My brother lawyers who had been present came to shake hands with me and say it was not so very bad for a first attempt. When I told them how I felt, they admitted that they had passed through the same experience. That comforted me a little. I went back, however, determined to send in my resignation. Before taking that course, I thought it over, and my conscience pricked me—I had to acknowledge that I was yielding to a ridiculous sentiment of pride. I should have liked to speak so well that my first appearance as a lawyer would be a triumph. That was absurd. The case, thank goodness, did not call for such oratory. Besides, it was natural that I should be nervous speaking in an almost empty room, before people whom I did not know, whom I could not

see and whose faces I could not observe; the discomfort I had endured was much like vertigo. This point of view induced me to make a decision—I would plead again in court, I would be like everyone else.

I confess that this resolution represented to me the greatest effort of will I had ever made in my life. Overcoming the discouragement which had invaded my spirit required an immense amount of energy. I still have occasion to recall that horrible first case, and each time I think of it I am disconcerted.

I have had many cases since then. Little by little I have learned to take them as a matter of course. When I spoke to some artists on this subject they told me that sort of mental distress was common, and was called "funk." That little incident had this good result, it taught me not to have too much confidence in myself, and made me realize the necessity of utilizing Braille more than I had ever done before. From that day thenceforth no document ever passed into

my hands without my preparing some notes for my plea with the aid of Braille, or copying in that system the papers I was to read before the tribunal. This soon became perfectly natural to me, and to-day I can follow a document with my fingers quite as easily as I could with my eyes if I could see.

The first client who put a fee on my office table filled my heart with pride and joy, even if the sum was a small one. I had passed through the hardest stage of my progress. I had only to keep on, that was comparatively simple.

During the whole period of my apprenticeship in court I had not had occasion to reckon with the real difficulties of a psychological nature which would later present themselves. But afterward, when I began my work in earnest as a lawyer, that is to say, when I handled more weighty cases for clients who could pay me well, I felt that they had a certain prejudice against me. Fragments of their talk were reported to me. They would say, "What Scapini accom-

plishes has merit; but without good eyes it will hardly be possible for him to form a clientèle. When there are so many lawyers admitted to the bar, why should people go to the one who, at first sight, seems the most handicapped?"

In ordinary life normal people think that every individual without sight inevitably becomes a creature deprived of all activity, all power, and all work. Human beings do not take the trouble to reflect, and the need of reflection does not impose itself upon them because the majority see, and only a few cannot see.

Still, it is certain that the instrument is created for the kind of work to be done. Wherever a necessity arises nature is driven to invent a way to meet it. When a blind person wishes to observe things he uses his intelligence to discover a method of accomplishing his end, and he is sure to find what he wants.

These are not the words of a dreamer. In the profession I follow the man of talent whom I

have already mentioned in these pages, and who came to see me at the Hôtel-Dieu, M. Marcel Bloch, a lawyer at the Court of Appeals, has proved this practical truth. His case has demonstrated that it is possible for a sightless person to succeed.

Another thing: it is difficult to contend with prejudices which people avoid putting into words. It is ill-advised to argue, to say, "I can do this, I can do that." One must be able to say, "I have done this, I have done that." Even then, if they believe you they are reticent. I sensed such a distrust in many clients; it was with fear that some of them brought me their documents. I almost had a notion that they were conferring a favor upon me. That idea was unbearable.

At that critical moment I met on my life path a man of great repute, himself a lawyer, who held an important position at the bar. He took me as a colleague, and I had important cases to conduct for him. Gradually the story of my success spread. It was averred that I

could conduct cases, obtain good results, and perform the duties of my profession as well as any seeing man.

I was aided by circumstances in this success. It so happened that I had to handle a pretty big suit, in which I had as opponents seventeen insurance companies. Six lawyers appeared in the field against me. I had the good fortune to win all along the line, and I received many compliments, not only from my friends, but even from my enemies. I do not mean to be vain over this accomplishment. I only mention it as a proof, as an example, I may say a striking, typical example, of what a blind man can do with a little industry, method, and good management. My friend M. Bloch had done quite as well as I did, and much better. Thus my clientèle grew larger and larger, and I was quite as active at the bar as I should have been if I had not been so cruelly afflicted.

Chapter III

IT WAS now eight years since I had been plunged into darkness. The strange world I lived in had become a familiar place. When there was no cruel material obstacle to remind me of it, I found myself forgetting it altogether.

The thought came to me often that nothing is so advantageous to the mind as the dark. I deliberately put out of my mind all gloomy subjects and everything connected with my past. I did not want to be irritable. I sought out a sphere of activity and self-fulfillment. When I felt my feet under me, that is to say, when I had risen above useless regrets and mundane difficulties, I remembered that I was not the only person in the dark.

More than two thousand people worthy of

regard suffered from the same disability that I did. I offered them my services. They had come together to form an association, of which I had the honor of being chosen president.

There reigned among the blinded soldiers a spirit of solidarity and mutual aid that greatly facilitated the task of those whose duty it was to direct the organization. The society had been founded in December, 1918, by twenty blinded soldiers with one of their own number at their head, Commandant Sallerin. Since then it had never ceased to grow, more and more blinded soldiers had become members. In 1923 there were twenty-five hundred members; Captain Issac had held the presidency four years.

The object of our Union is to give the blinded moral and material support. Up to date it has established several departments of real service. One of them is a salesroom which affords an invaluable outlet for articles produced by manual workers—brush makers, basket makers, and knitters. There is a rest house on the cottage

plan, situated at Franceville on the seashore, where the members can spend the summer under favorable conditions with their families. Also, there is a ways and means agency which not only assists those who are ill or having temporary difficulties, but also lends a helping hand to those who wish to build up a business, or undertake some enterprise that requires an outlay of money. The Union is directed by a board composed wholly of blinded soldiers. Its headquarters are at Paris, in a building where arrangements are made to accommodate blinded men from the country who have to stay in the capital. There they have a circulating library. The number of Braille books keeps on increasing. There still remains a great deal to be done; for the results we have obtained are just beginning to be constructive—people are beginning to realize what is needed, and what is possible for the blind. The aim I actually have in mind is to raise a fund which will enable the

organization to carry on its activities until the death of the last blinded soldier.

My duties as president of the Union brought me into contact with other societies of maimed veterans. It was then that I examined more closely the functioning of their associations. That is how I came to think of the part that the veterans might and ought to play in the life of a nation like ours.

In order to understand the origin of the activities of the veterans in France, we must go back to the Armistice. The millions of men who had been mobilized to the front were sent back to their homes. They came out of the furnace of a terrific trial, in which their health was broken, their positions were lost, and their civilian life upset. As soon as they were disbanded, weary and tired out with fighting for others, they occupied themselves with their own affairs. Bonds of comradeship bound them together.

The Politicians (with a big P) feared them

greatly. That was comprehensible; for if those millions had remained united, and if they had wished to take part in public affairs, they would have been masters of the situation.

The constant presence of death clarifies the mind—I may say it ennobles our sentiments. It is certain that the entrance of the veterans into the political domain would have brought about a great revolution.

But the politicians were not weary, like those who had returned from the war. That is easy to understand without my having to enlarge on the subject. Besides, the politicians were preoccupied with the danger which threatened them. They divided and dispersed the veterans as much as possible, and inserted in the statutes of each newly organized society the clause that the society was forbidden to have anything to do with politics. That was admirably contrived, and for seven years the veterans withdrew altogether from public affairs.

However, I met among the directors of other

societies a number of men who thought, like me, that if the veterans have a claim on the gratitude of the nation, they contracted on the battle field obligations to their dead comrades that are as imperative as this claim. They had poured out so much blood, suffered so greatly, and put forth such strength to achieve the preservation of their national heritage; it was unthinkable that those who had come out of the Great Adventure intact or maimed should regard their task as finished. They must needs bear in mind that Europe had been the sport of a total and complete overturning since the war. France, which had borne the greatest violence of the shock, was still terribly shaken, and would probably be disorganized for a long time.

Our country had lost 1,800,000 men slain on the fields of battle—the flower of her youth, the best part of her vitality, the chief hope of her future. That was a fearful drain upon her strength. The richest and most flourishing departments had been invaded, their power of

production was almost destroyed. We found ourselves in a state bordering upon destitution, and yet we were conquerors!

Under the circumstances, those who had fought in the war had the duty to pass judgment upon the situation. It was also their duty to contribute with all their might to the upbuilding of their country, a task which would be slow, step by step, accomplished only with constant, persistent toil. Again, it was their duty to prevent the ideas of vacillating parties from asserting themselves to the detriment of national rehabilitation. It was up to them to grasp the fact that all Europe had gone through a sudden, violent transition from 1914 to 1918. We had gone from one plan to another in every department of life—economic, financial, social, and even national. Little by little this conception of things as they really were became intelligible to the veterans, and when in troublous days depression knocked at our door, and the franc seemed likely to go the way of the mark,

the indignant veterans sat up and took notice of what was going on. They turned out of office M. Doumergue, President of the Republic, and, calling for one whose patriotism, lofty character, and integrity were not questioned, said, "He can and ought to form a cabinet with the idea of national unity. Let us be done with party quarrels! The fate of our country is at stake! One more false financial move, and France will fall under the too great pressure of demagogues who have neither scruple nor intelligence."

But the masses of the people, and the veterans too, were wide awake. The labor and perseverance of the people, their natural good sense and balance, helped to pull the chariot of state out of the mire; difficultly, slowly, it began to climb uphill.

France will need more years and more wisdom to regain her equilibrium. It is for the veterans to see to it that this result is attained. They have gained this right at the cost of too

much blood for anyone even to think of disputing it. They realize their duty, and they will perform it.

In November, 1927, the veterans and victims of the war, following the example of the American Legion and the British Legion, decided to unite in one single great association. They agreed that they would hold their conventions, or *états-généraux,* at Versailles, in the hall of the National Assembly where the delegates had sat during the peace negotiations. Every seven years the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies assemble there to elect the President of the Republic. That hall does not serve any other purpose. Hence it was offered to the veterans so that they could meet there. The representatives of three million men were to be gathered there, they honored me by asking me to preside on that occasion.

Such crowds had never filled Versailles before. From every part of France came men chosen by their comrades to discuss their gen-

eral interests. I was commissioned to receive the President and his cabinet and to make a speech.

I was touchd, infinitely touched, when I went up the steps to the presidential chair where I was to sit. At my right was Jourdain, his face marred by cruel wounds, and at my left Demogé, who had lost an arm, and who was President of the "Plus Grands Invalides." The "Marsellaise" burst forth. The President entered, I rose and read aloud my discourse. On that occasion my comrades showed me a warm, vibrant sympathy, the memory of which overpowers me as I write these lines. Speeches by the ministers followed mine. Then the President of the Republic spoke in his turn. When he had concluded he came up to me and, pressing my hand vigorously, expressed still more feelingly his sympathy and gratitude to all who had without saying a word offered their lives to their country in the most tragic hour of its history.

Chapter IV

FRANCE was full of the turmoil of the elections which were to take place in April of this year, 1928. Everyone bubbled over with the subject.

I divulged to my mother and several friends my intention of presenting myself as a candidate for the Chamber of Deputies. "Madness!" cried some. "Splendid!" said others. Their opinions were divided. I heard quite as many pros as cons. This strengthened my view with regard to the shaping of my life—a view which dictated that I should obey my own instinct and listen only to the voice within myself and act on my own initiative.

Unaided I constructed a little plan of campaign, the only merit of which was that it was not inspired by any political bias. For guidance

I took reason and common sense. I worked out a program in which the social question and the lessening and removal of labor struggles by improving the condition of the working people occupied the chief place. The fight against Communism was now in the course of unfolding itself. I also developed the interesting feature of international collaboration and the intellectual intermingling of the peoples, to be brought about by an exchange of students between schools and universities. Having decided upon my program, I proceeded to look for an electoral district which would be likely to favor me.

In France there are more than ten thousand candidates and only six hundred seats. I need not say I did not find a single vacant district. I resolved, therefore, to attack somebody who was in power, and I chose the district in which my residence is situated, the first district of the 17th Arrondissement of Paris. There I found I had to contend with two men who shared my views, M. Pugliesi-Conti, a deputy of the dis-

trict who had held his seat for twenty years, and M. Castille, a pharmacist of some intelligence. Besides, I had other adversaries of less caliber, fourteen in all.

As soon as my plan was known in political circles, I received a flood of advice and wise counsels: "Attack that stalwart bulwark, M. Pugliesi-Conti? You will be simply wasting your ammunition. You will never succeed in dislodging him." I summoned all my obstinacy and stood my ground.

I at once learned from conversations which were repeated to me that when M. Pugliesi-Conti first heard of my plan he was aghast at my out-and-out audacity. My presuming to attack him in his stronghold was beyond his comprehension. Then he had decided to laugh at the idea. Out of the goodness of his heart he went so far as to pity me; he had not the slightest doubt of my defeat.

By a decree of the President of the Republic, the Chamber of Deputies was closed, and the

electoral period declared open. It was now March. A month and a half before the day of the first ballot, accompanied by a few friends, I held meetings in small café halls which I selected in every part of the district. It was no brilliant affair.

I explained the mysteries of modern politics to about ten people who listened to me with good will. I did not deceive myself as to the difficulties of the game I was playing. Pugliesi-Conti, "an old bird" in politics, sixty-five years of age, had gained the support of all the groups of his class; as for me, I had undertaken the pretty delicate task of convincing the electors of what I thought was right without recourse to pressure or compromise, and I kept repeating that the good sense of the French could be depended upon to grasp public problems.

Luckily I had quite a lively correspondence with Pugliesi-Conti, and the newspapers got hold of it. Public opinion was aroused, and my candidacy became something more than a petty

political scheme of office hunting. The veterans came to my standard, the battle began in earnest, and my opponent for the first time realized that it was not good policy for him to treat me as scornfully as he had done since the campaign started.

Castille had announced a meeting which I resolved to attend, in order to observe what it was like. I arrived at eight o'clock at the Wagram Hall, a small place where there was a dense crowd, about two thousand people. At the end of the platform Castille was excitedly moving this way and that; his committee stood by him; an important, dignified gentleman presided.

M. Castille is a tall, slender man with disproportionately long arms and legs. He wears a beard like Christ, his voice is thin—the kind of voice called falsetto. When I pushed my way into the hall he sailed into some verbiage from which he apparently had trouble in extricating himself: "The artistic inheritance of France, the pictures in our museums, the price-

less treasures of our fields . . ." The crowd was getting rather impatient. At intervals such words reached me as, "Our coal mines! Our farm lands and oil wells . . ." "It is expedient to leave the drug stores open Sundays." (Shrieks of delight from the audience.) "Liberty to work . . ."

In a quiet moment a middle-aged, fat gentleman, rosy-faced, who looked like a respectable middle-class citizen, rose and courteously accosted the orator:

"Will you permit me, Citizen Castille, to ask a question?"

"Of course," said Castille guardedly, feeling vaguely that somebody was using his own thunderbolt against him. The short, fat man continued:

"If our votes should make you a member of Parliament, would you take your stand positively, but without argument and without subterfuge, for or against the use of laxatives?" He asked his question so seriously, so solemnly,

that a second passed before the crowd caught the meaning. Citizen Castille, the pharmacist, stood open-mouthed, and from the audience there went up a roar of hilarity. The citizens and electors slapped their legs, repeating the question until their joy melted away. I left at that moment, having heard enough.

I wanted to have a similar experience at one of M. Pugliesi-Conti's meetings; but I was denied admission by that candidate's supercilious orders. He characterized it as "a private gathering." This is rather paradoxical as far as elections are concerned, since universal suffrage, according to its definition, gives all electors an equal right to judge those for whom they are to vote. Thus, then, M. Pugliesi-Conti refused to meet me personally. Why? Could it be that he was afraid of a public debate with me? I dared not believe that. What was the reason, then? Perhaps this was the explanation:

For twenty-five years my adversary had made a specialty of super-patriotism. Every

Sunday, in the Place de la Concorde, he reconquered Alsace-Lorraine. He was president of the veteran sharpshooters of 1870, military in spirit, fiercely pugnacious. Every year M. Pugliesi-Conti delivered an enthusiastic discourse at the foot of the monument erected to the sharpshooters of 1870, a discourse in which the glorious part of the sharpshooters was blended with his own.

To be sure, the war of 1914 had dimmed that aureole a bit; for while the fighting was going on his rôle was an undistinguished one. Seized with bellicose ardor and eager to drive out the Prussians, as he said, he had clad himself in an absurd uniform; but there his military equipment stopped. He had no gun—perhaps he was forbidden to have one.

He did not leave the boundary of the respectable faubourgs of Paris, but with voice and gestures he energetically encouraged those who went to the front. His fiery military career, which lasted only a month, was made famous

by eight days' imprisonment which the Governor-General of Paris inflicted upon him.

Now that the campaign was in full swing, Pugliesi-Conti sent his electors circulars vibrant with an ardent verbal patriotism, and in all probability represented me as an arch-enemy of the nation. Yet I was decorated with the French and Belgian military medal and the war cross, and I was an officer of the Legion of Honor. Pugliesi-Conti hardly attached any importance to all these honors; I was his political opponent, therefore I was an enemy of France. He had in a sense created a monopoly of patriotism for himself.

It occurred to me to make a rapid calculation, so as to know what rôle he could have played in the War of 1870 about which he talked so incessantly. In 1928 M. Pugliesi-Conti stated that he was sixty-six years of age. In 1870, the date of his glorious exploits, he was then—my short calculation revealed the fact—eight years old! As the war lasted only a year,

he was nine when it ended. All the same, that is rather young for a sharpshooter!

In 1914 the precocious sharpshooter of 1870 was fifty-two. At that age, probably fatigued by all the exhortations to fight that he had "spouted" from 1870 to 1914, and in spite of the fact that he was only fifty-two, he deemed himself too old to participate effectively in the reconquest of Alsace-Lorraine which he had so long preached. That was perfectly reasonable, and I should never have reproached him; but why, then, did he wish to have me appear as a traitor beside a patriot like himself? And the most curious thing of all is, I never talked about war, and he talked about it all the time.

My meetings came in rapid succession. More and more people attended them. On the whole, I was quite satisfied. My adversary lost his grip, and in his leaflets he accused me of profound duplicity. One day he went a step further, to hear him I was nothing less than a Communist. Immediately I invited him publicly to a great

meeting, and I hired a vast hall. I sent out thousands of invitations. I hoped that my adversary would respond to my challenge and honor me with his presence. When I entered the place where the meeting was held seven thousand people were packed into the hall. No Pugliesi-Conti.

I was somewhat disappointed; for the idea of the encounter had pleased me. My opponent sent me word that he would not hear of being disturbed that evening; but the next day he would hold a public meeting himself, and he expected me to come. The place chosen by him was in a school, and hardly held five or six hundred people. It was obvious that he counted on filling it only with partisans favorable to him. I told all this to the seven thousand electors in the hall, and they hooted Pugliesi-Conti. Seven thousand voices yelled, "We will go! We will go!" I thought to myself, "Pugliesi-Conti won't enjoy himself to-morrow." I proceeded to explain my program. That evening Pugliesi-

Conti's sly trick insured for me a triumph. I cannot say how deeply touched I was by all the manifestations of friendship toward me on that occasion. Women and children came to kiss me, and that moved me especially.

At the end of the meeting a man came up to me and said, "I happened to pass this place, and I stepped in. I make haste to tell you I am not one of your electors; but I know you are conducting your campaign alone, and a political campaign is expensive. Will you permit me to give you this check? Do not try to find out who I am."

I took the check and thanked him. I thought within myself, "He is a good fellow who wishes to show me his sympathy by making a small contribution of several hundred francs. I do not want to hurt his feelings by refusing." I handed the check to my secretary. When we got home he said, "That is a check for ten thousand francs." I have never found out who that man was; but that evening I was full of

confidence; for when people are so interested that they open their purses it is a sure sign that their sentiments are not feigned, but genuine.

The next day, in the afternoon, I received a call from one of my electors, who brought me a circular addressed to him, emanating from M. Pugliesi-Conti. The letter gave notice that the person who received it was to go very early to the meeting to which I myself had been summoned, and that, instead of entering by the door designated on the posters of Pugliesi-Conti, he was to go in through another door near by. The ruse was simple. M. Pugliesi-Conti had advised those whom he thought were his friends to get all the seats by going in through a side door, not the principal entrance, so that when those who were friendly to me or indifferent arrived, the hall would be packed with M. Pugliesi-Conti's adherents. This showed clearly that one did not need to be a soldier to acquire the art of strategy. Losing no time, I called for fifteen or sixteen comrades to meet

the emergency, showed them the letter, and asked them to place themselves before the door indicated by Pugliesi-Conti and prevent any living creature from entering. They performed their duty in an urbane, courteous manner, and no one entered unless he went to the door officially designated.

The street was black with people. Crowds were everywhere; the courtyard of the school was full, some people had climbed the trees, and others were hanging onto the window sills. When I reached the Préau des Écoles there was wild excitement in the hall. M. Pugliesi-Conti, standing up on a table, shouting at the top of his lungs, was vainly trying to make himself heard. He emitted inarticulate, hoarse sounds.

My entrance was marked by a great swaying and pushing of the throng, a billowing sea of humanity. In the midst of countless difficulties and obstructions I successfully made my

way to the platform. I lifted myself up on the table beside Pugliesi-Conti.

When the audience saw me they became silent. Scarcely had the din subsided when Pugliesi-Conti turned upon me:

"That's a cowardly trick, Scapini. The men here are all your friends. Many of them are not electors."

He was interrupted by a formidable hooting from the crowd, who waved their arms, brandishing the circulars he had sent out. They whipped their electoral cards out of their pockets, and for half an hour or more it was impossible to be heard in that vociferating hall. With great difficulty I managed to quiet the crowd, then Pugliesi-Conti renewed his attack.

"You are a pawn of the Communists."

That was the climax; the hall was in an uproar, they wanted to lynch Pugliesi-Conti. I turned to him and said, "If you continue talking in that tone I shall not be responsible for your life."

Pugliesi-Conti was deadly pale. His voice trembled as he answered:

"Why did you come out against me?"

"Why, to fight you, of course." He blazed up in anger.

"You shall not succeed!" and he raised his fist above my head. One of my friends stopped him. If he had had the misfortune to touch me I should have flung him into the midst of the swaying, shrieking crowd. The meeting was presided over by an old general on Pugliesi-Conti's committee, a man with a sly eye and a horrid voice. He sent a telephone message to the chief of police, urgently demanding a large number of guards. They were sent over. Castille, the third candidate, who was present, had placed himself behind Pugliesi-Conti and me, and with his arms extended in a solemn manner which did not tend to pacify anybody, he seemed crucified with grief. He had the knack of making crowds laugh, there was such a comic twist in his make-up. The wrath of the people gave

way to immense hilarity, and when the agents of the police arrived they did not have much trouble clearing the hall. Pugliesi-Conti left, guarded by four policemen, and I, too, went out while they gave me an ovation. I felt that I had the advantage, and the outcome of the battle was no longer a matter of doubt for me.

The evening before the day of the first ballot Pugliesi-Conti had put up a poster which accused me in violent terms of having refused to come out against a notorious Communist, thus proving myself a pawn of that extremist party. In his accusation he named the head of an important political group which had officially pledged him their support. The accusation was a lie pure and simple, and I had only twenty-four hours in which to reply. It was not enough for me to say, "That is false," I must strike a mighty blow.

When the poster was read to me I sprang to the telephone. I had the luck to catch the leader of the political group in question. I explained

the situation to him and said, "Although you are my adversary, since you uphold Pugliesi-Conti, you cannot let pass an accusation which is so obviously a calumny without challenging it. Will you please write me a word denying the charge?"

I sensed some hesitation at the other end of the wire. Someone answered, "That is a difficult thing to do. A delicate position, you know . . ." and so forth. I had prepared a letter beforehand, and while I held the receiver in one hand, I made a sign with the other to my secretary to come nearer. I gave him the letter saying, "Run to that address and wait for the response. They cannot tell you he is out, for I shall keep him on the telephone until you get there."

It was a drama—a veritable motion-picture drama. While my secretary traversed Paris at full speed, I put forth a world of ingenuity to carry on the conversation. Should I be able to hold out long enough? I was relieved of my

anxiety when I heard my interlocutor say into the receiver, "Wait, your secretary is announced."

"Yes," I replied, "I have kept you on the telephone so as to make sure that you would be in to answer my letter—the one which has just been brought for you. Good-bye, dear friend." I hung up the receiver.

As soon as I received his letter I had it published, also a telegram from a former minister of war, equally implicated by the loose talk of M. Pugliesi-Conti. Two hours afterward everything appeared in good form on my posters. Thus the public could see testimonials in my favor given by those who officially supported my adversary. This blow was terrible for Pugliesi-Conti—so terrible that there was no parade.

The next day the first ballot was taken. I was weary, and decided to sleep all day while awaiting the result of the elections. In the evening I

was awakened with the news that I had 5,800 votes and Pugliesi-Conti 5,200. The other candidates divided the rest. No one had been elected, since there was no absolute majority; nevertheless, the fight had ended in victory for me. Pugliesi-Conti was obliged to withdraw, which he did with no good grace. In announcing his resignation he breathed out craftiness, if not rage. The political groups which on the day of the first ballot had been my opponents, or neutral, immediately took up my cause with hot partisanship. However, I was the same man as before, my opinions had not altered, my program remained unchanged. This was a curious turning of the tables; but in political matters it is not wise to go too deep into the reasons for my good luck. I confined myself to observing the fact.

As my campaign had brought me some publicity, I was asked actually to support other candidates. That was how I happened to go to

a Bolshevist gathering in order to speak for a candidate of my class against the revolutionists. It was an amusing experience.

A class-conscious citizen had the floor; he was expatiating on the delights of the Soviet paradise: "All men brothers and comrades! All going hand in hand! There is no dirty bourgeoisie; nobody has any property, but everything is owned by all for the benefit of all." At first sight that seemed strange. I made that remark to the orator; but he confined himself to a single peremptory argument: "Hold your tongue!" he said in a scornful tone. People of his sort do not bother their heads much about logic in their extreme Marxian ideas.

My turn came to step up to the platform. The audience listened to me without hostility. I exposed the utopian absurdities of a Soviet régime; I told them I understood perfectly that there were some discontented people, and it was natural that they should throw themselves into the camp of a revolutionary party;

but I said that such a party could not bring them any satisfaction. On the other hand, I continued, it was possible to reduce human misery to a minimum quietly and without bloodshed, by means of social reforms well planned and thoroughly understood.

The crowd hesitated, then there was a violent interpellation; one of the leaders, pointing to me with a vengeful finger, bellowed, "It is thanks to tyrants like him that our best men are in prison." Before giving the crowd time to yell, I replied coldly:

"It is not thanks to me, for if I had the power to put your leaders in prison I should not send them there, but to the gallows; they are your worst enemies."

The mob yelled; but at the end some of those who had manifested discontent came and shook hands with me, saying:

"You were right to speak out as you did; some things must be said."

When the second ballot was taken I was elected by a sort of plebiscite. The electors of my district had had confidence in me, despite my infirmity and the inconveniences it seemed to entail. I was a Deputy of Paris.

Chapter V

DURING my campaign I received eloquent, yet simple and sincere tokens of devotion and sympathy from humble folk. I was more deeply stirred than any written words can express. An election like mine carries with it urgent moral duties. I have no right to betray the trust which so many good people have put in me.

I received letters from all sorts and conditions of men. The veterans and war victims manifested their affection and confidence in me.

To be quite just, I must say also that I received some anonymous letters, very few, really, in which I was properly set to rights about myself. I have kept them because they will afford me precious instruction if it ever happens that I acquire too good an opinion of myself. I was

interviewed by all the French newspapers. The magic wand of a vote was enough to induce people to consult me in the most varied matters.

Thus, for example, a man with drooping lip and hesitating speech called on me every other day to beg me to use all my influence so that the inmates of the insane asylum, Sainte-Anne, would be permitted to play "Bilboquet." I assured him of the deep interest I felt in his problem and promised to attempt the impossible to satisfy his legitimate and humanitarian desire. The poor man was evidently well informed on this subject. He had sojourned a long time in that asylum, and I should not be surprised if he was sent back there.

I am happy that I was elected because it is the best answer I can give to the objections which were raised when I presented myself as a candidate.

The Chamber of Deputies was not to be in session until the beginning of June. I had, then,

a month in which to put my affairs—my business affairs—in order. An assistant lawyer was engaged whose duty it is to keep near me wherever I am, so that he may render me aid in emergency. The ballots were marked in a special way: those with one hole meant "Nay," and those with two holes meant "Yea."

I arranged the work of my secretaries so that my legal affairs would not be confused with affairs of a political nature. Now everything is running smoothly, and there is no overlapping.

During that vacation period I went to the Chamber of Deputies several times. I was welcomed with cordial sympathy. Several of my colleagues honored me by choosing me co-president of a political group whose aim is to study economic and social questions more thoroughly. I finally found my place in the arena.

The 2d of June the Chamber of Deputies was full when the senior member entered, saluted with a great shout, "Au Champ," which echoed to the rafters. There is always a cer-

tain solemnity about the opening session of Parliament at the Palais-Bourbon, and when I was there for the first time on that occasion I was profoundly impressed.

The majority of deputies had been elected on a program of national unity, the main features of which had been outlined by M. Raymond Poincaré. It seemed to me in accordance with sound logic and good sense that the president of the Chamber should be chosen from those who represented the majority of deputies and public opinion. At that time I witness a curious lobbying campaign which had the object of electing a president from the Socialists, that is to say, against the will of the majority of the people. The arguments formulated were as follows: "M. Bouisson, Socialist candidate for the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies, understood the technique of assemblies, and was a man who knew how to conduct debates," and so forth. Those were arguments which I probably did not understand; anyway, I found

myself opposing him. I do not deny that M. Ferdinand Bouisson is a charming man; but the opinion of the majority of the people ought to be respected.

M. Bouisson was elected. I realized then that the logic and common sense of the people are separated by an almost unbridgeable chasm from the logic and common sense of politicians. I think it would be well to meditate on the subject. Perhaps it would explain the misfortunes of our time and the distress of so many French men and women.

Ministers and politicians lose their way too often in a wilderness of fictitious values and conventional ideas which are rooted in outworn traditions, but which they still keep alive for their own ends. While they exhaust themselves in vain and fruitless struggles, time sweeps onward, implacable and swift, and the law of progress asserts itself. Such men will not emerge from their utopias unless a catastrophe threatens them. In such a crisis they tremble

and become small. That was what happened in 1926, when the multitude, roused by the financial depression of the country, stormed the Chamber of Deputies, threatening to throw ministers and deputies into the water. Both ministers and deputies were terribly upset, their party spirit weakened because their fear increased, and Poincaré rose to the occasion. With a little common sense he began laboriously to straighten out the situation, while the country bore the consequences of previous mismanagement.

At the end of July, 1928, a great joy came into my life. My comrades of the American Legion invited me as guest of honor to attend their convention, which was to take place in San Antonio, Texas, at the beginning of October. I accepted with pleasure, happy at the prospect of again seeing my comrades-in-arms and telling them what cordial friendship the veterans

of France feel toward that great nation. I am delighted to have an opportunity to know better a people who have managed so admirably to adjust their economic situation to the needs of modern life.

THE END